# Kirklees College Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2025-26 to 2028-29

## 1. Introduction & Strategic Aim

Kirklees College (KC) is in the heart of West Yorkshire. Its student community reflects the diversity of the local area and offers a highly inclusive provision which supports both young people and adults from all communities and particularly those from most disadvantaged backgrounds to progress and develop skills leading to job outcomes or higher study. KC has a strategic focus on providing the knowledge, skills, behaviours and expertise needed to address skills shortage areas and support economic growth in the Kirklees region.

The college makes a significant difference to improving the lives of those who are most disadvantaged and at risk of long-term unemployment and cross-generational poverty because of poor educational outcomes. Although the Kirklees district has areas of relative affluence, it also has areas of significant deprivation. Using Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), around 64.5% of the college’s 16-18 students and 67.5% of our 19+ students are in the three bands of highest deprivation. This is significantly higher than General Further Education (GFE) colleges, where these figures are 41.4% and 46.5% respectively. Our students have significantly lower than average starting points. Only 54% of our students have English at grade 4 or higher at the start of the academic year, putting us 201 out of 222 GFE colleges. For maths, only 42% of students have grade 4 or higher, which puts us at 207 out of 222. KC is the key provider of post-16 SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) provision in Kirklees and there has been a significant increase in the number of students with EHCPs attending the college in the last three years, from 451 in 2018/19, to 542 in 2022/23. We are aware of the challenges of the local area and how disadvantaged groups face the greatest risk of unemployment and live in areas that are defined as being the most deprived in England, and has worsened in recent years.

The college has a common set of values for both students and staff: ‘Kindness’, ‘Unity’ and ‘Excellence’. The College firmly locates its higher skills provision at the core of its mission, which is simple and at the heart of everything we do; *‘Creating Opportunities, Changing Lives’*. Our mission is underpinned by the following Strategic Goals (2022-25):

### 1.1. People

* An excellent culture in which to work and learn
* A dynamic interconnected digital learning experience

### 1.2 Performance

* A fantastic student learning experience with great outcomes
* Strong, sustainable financial performance

### 1.3 Position

* Recognised by employers and students as the provider of choice in Kirklees for higher technical skills
* Every centre demonstrates strong civic responsibility
* We play an influential role in combatting climate emergency

Our HE and Higher Skills strategic aims (2022-25) that link directly to equality of opportunity and our APP Theories of Change are presented below:

* Plan a HE and Higher skills curriculum that meets local, regional and national skill needs, offering accessible HE provision for the Kirklees community and wider environs.
* Provide equal opportunities for every student to discuss, evaluate and contribute to the improvement of their particular HE programme.
* Provide progression opportunities for HE studies from existing study programmes at level 1-3.
* Increase HE & professional studies internal progression and external applications.
* Support Teachers to engage in Continued Professional Development (CPD) within their subject disciplines and enhance their pedagogy further through HE staff development.

We offer a range of provision from Entry Level to Higher Education. We offer academic, applied, technical, vocational and professional programmes that enable our students to meet and exceed their aspirations, ensuring that each individual reaches their fullest potential.

With over 10,000 students on full-time and part-time courses, and apprenticeships, we provide seven bespoke centres across the Kirklees region, from two main centres based in Dewsbury and Huddersfield, and dedicated learning centres for Animal Care, Construction, Engineering, Process Manufacturing and the Pioneer Higher Skills Centre which is dedicated to Higher Education (HE) and Higher Skills.

The College offers HE courses with achievable entry requirements in order to encourage applications from those with lower grades, mature applicants with relevant experience or applicants from non-standard entry routes.

Our present HE offer is modest with just 1% of the student body enrolled on HE programmes including Computing, Animal Management, Engineering and Process Manufacturing, and Teacher Education. We offer a range of level 4-7 programmes, both full-time and part-time including Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Diplomas (HNDs), including the new Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), Higher Apprenticeships and Foundation Degrees (in partnership with the University of Central Lancashire).

Our Higher Education and Higher Skills strategy, aligned with government reforms, is committed to expanding our HTQ programmes. This will enable a more employer-responsive, flexible, and modular qualification model, allowing both mature and young learners to upskill and retrain to meet local and national priority targets. HTQs will address national, regional, and local skills priorities, recognizing emerging growth areas and supporting the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for West Yorkshire.

With the introduction of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) in January 2026, HTQs will become a more accessible and attractive Higher Education offer. In September 2025, we launched our first approved HTQ in Engineering, funded by Skills Injection Fund (SIF) monies, with plans to develop HTQs in Construction, Animal Management, Digital Technologies, Leadership and Management, Hospitality, and additional Higher Apprenticeships over the next four years (see Annex D).

In line with the Higher Education and Research Act (2017) section 32, our Access and Participation Plan (APP) demonstrates how KC will ensure all student groups have equal support to access HE, succeed on their chosen programmes and continue to further study and/or secure good employment from this. It is our aim to improve the equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups (URGs) in our HE provisions. This plan identifies several risks to equality of opportunity for our students accompanied by a detailed overview of our planned intervention strategies created to address those risks.

## 2. Risks to Equality of Opportunity

In this section, we summarise the key risks to equality of opportunity that have been identified through our assessment of our own performance (Annex A: Assessment of Performance) and consideration of the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR). This register identifies 12 overarching risks within the sector that could potentially act as a barrier for certain student demographics in accessing, succeeding in and progressing from HE.

Our small HE student numbers have suppressed the Office for Students (OfS) dashboard data, therefore intersectional, disaggregated and granular analysis has been limited. We have subsequently used internal data and Index of Mutiple Deprivation (IMD) data to assess performance, considering the different stages of the student lifecycle (See Annex A: Assessment of Performance).

From our Assessment of Performance, we have highlighted two main risks relevant to our context in Kirklees. These will inform the planned intervention strategies designed and developed to mitigate the risks to equality of opportunity.

Risk 2.1: We have identified a significant gap in **achievement** between students from low and high deprivation groups. This data indicates that students from the most deprived areas (IMD 1-2) are less likely to achieve than students from more affluent areas (IMD 3-10). Despite relatively high pass rates, in 2022/23 the achievement gap was significant with students from IMD 1-2 and IMD 3-10 showing achievement of 60% and 78.85% respectively with an achievement gap of 18.85%. This data indicates that students from areas of most deprivation/low household income may be experiencing a risk to equality of opportunity and through consideration of the EORR evidence suggests this may be related to the following underlying sector-wide risks:

Risk 1: Knowledge and Skills Risk 2: Information and Guidance Risk 3: Perception of HE Risk 5: Limited choice of course type and delivery mode Risk 7: Insufficient Academic Support Risk 8: Mental Health Risk 10: Cost Pressures

Risk 2.2: We have identified a gap in **achievement rates** between young and mature students, with mature students being more likely to achieve than young students. Despite relatively high pass rates, in 2022/23 the achievement gap is significant with young and mature students showing achievement of 62.5% and 80% respectively with an achievement gap of 17.50%. This data indicates that our young students may be experiencing a risk to equality of opportunity. Through consideration of the EORR evidence suggests this may be related to the following underlying sector-wide risks:

Risk 1: Knowledge and Skills Risk 2: Information and Guidance Risk 3: Perception of HE Risk 5: Limited choice of course type and delivery mode Risk 7: Insufficient Academic Support Risk 8: Mental Health Risk 10: Cost Pressures

Any of these identified risks are likely to impact a student’s access to HE, continuation and attainment and completion of their HE qualification, progression into employment or further study and therefore provide an inequality of opportunity.

With the identified risks in mind, our intervention strategies will be designed to reduce inequality of opportunities, with the primary aim of meeting the two key objectives outlined below. Further details of our context and supporting literature for EORR risks 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10 can be found in Annex B.

## 3. Objectives

### 3.1: Performance Target Success 1 (PTS\_1)

Reduce the achievement gap between students from most deprived socio-economic backgrounds (IMD Q1-2) and more affluent socio-economic backgrounds (IMD 3-10) from 18.85% in 2022/23 to 6% in 2028/29.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Year | Deprivation Achievement Gap |
| Year 1: 2025/6  | 16% |
| Year 2: 2026/7 | 12% |
| Year 3: 2027/8  | 9% |
| Year 4: 2028/9  | 6% |

Table 1: Targets for achievement gap between students from most deprived socio-economic backgrounds (IMD Q1-2) and more affluent socio-economic backgrounds (IMD 3-10) from 2025 to 2029.

### 3.2: Performance Target Success 1 (PTS\_2)

Reduce the achievement gap between young and mature students from 17.50% in 2022/23 to 2% in 2028/29.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Year | Age Achievement Gap  |
| Year 1: 2025/6  | 14% |
| Year 2: 2026/7 | 10% |
| Year 3: 2027/8  | 6% |
| Year 4: 2028/9  | 2% |

Table 2: Targets for achievement gap between young and mature students from 2025 to 2029.

We have focussed on 2 main objectives that form our Performance Success Targets. We are aware that much of our work also aligns with ‘access’ to HE e.g. our collaborations with GHWY and Careers Events. Yet we feel that our APP focus is presently to support student attainment and completion by enhancing the quality of our HE provision and student experience, particularly with our target groups, before creating additional access targets. Despite this, we expect significant growth of our HE provision over the next 4 years with the commencement of a number of new HTQs. This will naturally offer a greater choice of course and mode of delivery (risk 5).

## 4. Intervention strategies and Expected Outcomes

In this section, we outline our intervention strategies which summarise the programmes of work we will deliver to address our identified risks to equality of opportunity and achieve our objectives listed in Section 3. Please note the order in which the Intervention Strategies are documented does not reflect any hierarchy of importance.

### 4.1 Intervention Strategy 1 (IS1):

Objectives and targets: to reduce the achievement gap between students from deprived socio-economic backgrounds (IMD Q1-2) and more affluent socio-economic backgrounds (IMD 3-10) from 18.85% in 2022/23 to 6% in 2028/29 (Target\_PTS\_1).

Secondary Objective(s): PTS\_2 (IS 2)

Risks to equality of opportunity: 1. Knowledge and Skills, 2. Information and Guidance, 3. Perception of HE, 5. Limited choice of course type and delivery mode 7. Insufficient Academic Support, 8. Mental Health, 10. Cost Pressures

#### 4.1.1 IS1.1 Assigned Preparation for Adulthood Coach (PfAC) to support DSA applications and monitoring of DSA funded interventions for HE students

Activity: At HE Student Inductions, our PfAC will review the Disability Support Allowance (DSA) process /increase awareness to encourage all eligible learners to apply for DSA. Communication will continue throughout the course to ensure that we are supporting students in receipt of DSA (i.e. SEND needs, including Mental Health problems) effectively so they can fully engage and succeed (New Activity).

Inputs: Staff time: PfAC Creation/development of resources/1:1 support and workshop/curriculum tutorial presentations and activity evaluation time.

Outcomes: Improved communication and engagement with support services, Improved student completion, Increase in DSA applications (and early applications)

Cross Intervention: IS2 (This activity links directly to EORR Risks: 1, 2, 8, 10)

#### 4.1.2 IS1.2 Learning Resource Centre (LRC) link assigned to support HE provisions

Activity: During Student Induction or as a refresher for HE returning year 2 students, academic support will be provided by a LRC HE link librarian. This will be as planned group workshops and also on an adhoc basis as required by individual students throughout the academic year.

Topics include (academic integrity - referencing/plagiarism/paraphrasing) and ethical and responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (Enhanced Existing Activity).

Inputs: Staff time: Librarian and Learning Resource Centre staff (co-teaching/training), Digital Manager/Personal Development Tutors (PDTs) and Evaluation time.

Outcomes: Improved academic skills and confidence, Improved student completion

Cross Intervention: IS2 (This activity links directly to EORR Risks: 1, 7, 10)

#### 4.1.3 IS1.3 Engagement and Achievement Analytics

Activity: Update Management Information Systems (MIS) to facilitate the inclusion of HE data on the college data dashboard (e.g. attendance/achievement/progress) and also include an EDI component (i.e. disadvantaged postcodes/Free School Meals/URGs).

Pre-PMR Meetings with CAMs and Quality Director/Quality Programme Leads will take place to support preparation for PMRs will include narrative around HE achievement data/predicted outcomes (and disaggregated data: e.g. FSM/URGs) prompted by developed dashboard.

Performance Management Review (PMR) meetings with Curriculum Area Managers (CAMs) and Executive Leadership Team (ELT), will include narrative around HE achievement data/predicted outcomes (and disaggregated data: e.g. FSM/URGs).

Standardisation of Markbook platform use in all HE areas to ensure centralised monitoring system of HE achievement /progress data.

**(Enhanced Activity)**

Inputs: Staff Time: Development: Management Information Systems (MIS) team, CAMs, HE Quality Manager, Director of Quality, Executive and Senior Leaderships Teams. Staff training/support time with Programme Quality Leads (Markbook)

Outcomes: Increased awareness of assignment progress/attendance for all HE students (including targeted groups). Improved forecasting of achievement data. Timelier implementation of support/actions. Improved achievement/ attendance/retention

Cross Intervention: IS2 (This activity links directly to EORR Risks: 2, 7, 8)

#### 4.1.4 IS1.4 Early formative feedback in semester 1

Activity: Our HE Quality review process involves key activity including learning walks, student voice and IQA activity. Key quality assurance themes include: Academic Integrity, Academic Writing, Levelness and Criticality that enable judgement against OfS Ongoing Conditions of registration (B1 B2 B3 B4 etc.). Sits in line with our new Teaching Excellence Framework (5 pillars of excellence includes assessment).

This pre-existing quality activity is to be developed to ensure that our HE students can benefit from early formative feedback opportunities **(Enhanced Activity).**

Inputs: Staff Time: Quality team comprising of Teaching Learning and Digital Leads (TLDLs) and Programme Quality Leads (PQLs) to perform HE quality activity with all HE staff. Evaluation activity. CPD activity (as required)

Outcomes: Improved student achievement. Improved first time submission success

Cross Intervention: IS2 (This activity links directly to EORR Risks: 1, 7)

#### 4.1.5 IS1.5 Summer HE Transition Boot Camps/kickstart workshops

Activity: 1-2 day workshops aiming to bridge academic skills between level 3 and level 4 and support students in realising the expectations of HE, whilst raising confidence **(New Activity).**

Inputs: Staff time: academic staff, Preparation of resources, Evaluation activity

Outcomes: Increased achievement and retention

Cross Intervention: IS2 (This activity links directly to EORR Risks: 1, 2, 7)

#### 4.1.6 IS1.6 Personal Development Tutors/Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY) Collaborations

Activity: Bespoke cross college activity dependent on needs of each provision. Outreach Officer sharing existing GHWY personal development resources (<https://gohigherwestyorks.ac.uk/resources/teachers-carers-advisors/key-downloads-workbooks-and-tools/>) using a train the trainer model, and offer of co-teaching model. Materials are used to support PDT in delivery in tutorial classes. Themes e.g. metacognition, problem solving, communication/HE Offer/UCAS applications/bursary IAG. (New Activity)

Inputs: Staff time: Training sessions (Outreach officer/PDCs). Development time (PDTs) to contextualise raising attainment resources for tutorial groups. Activity evaluation time (PDTs) Outreach Officer/PDT shadowing/co-teaching.

Outcomes: Increase learners knowledge and aspirations and interactions with HE and related career opportunities whilst building confidence.

Cross Intervention: IS2 (This activity links directly to EORR Risks: 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8).

Total cost of IS1 over 4-year cycle: £165,325

### 4.2 Summary of evidence base and rationale

We have conducted a literature review, consulted our own internal data, student body and narrative to provide our evidence base and rationale to support the planned intervention strategy activities detailed above (see Annex B).

### 4.3 Evaluation

To ensure robustness of our evaluation strategy with appropriateness to our planned intervention activities, we have sought guidance from the OfS [Evaluation Toolkit (officeforstudents.org.uk)](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/2922/using-standards-of-evidence-to-evaluate-impact-of-outreach.pdf), [TASO (2023) Impact Evaluation with Smalll cohorts: Methodology Guidance](https://s33320.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/TASO_-Report_Impact-evaluation-with-small-cohorts_methodology-guidance_Secured-1.pdf). Also very useful was the [OfS Addressing Barriers to Student Success Programme (ABSS)](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/addressing-barriers-to-student-success-programme/what-s-the-evidence/) and particularly the [OfS Summative Evaluation Report](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/5038/wecd-abss-summative-evaluation-report.pdf). We have also relied upon TASO’s [Theory of Change Resources](https://taso.org.uk/evidence/evaluation-guidance-resources/toc/) and attended Evaluation/Theory of Change framework training provided by our partners GHWY to gain a solid foundation from which to design and develop our intervention strategies.

We have considered the 3 types of impact evaluation methods: Type 1: Narrative, Type 2: Empirical Enquiry and Type 3: Causality. With Intervention Strategy 1 we intend to generate Type 2 Empirical Enquiry Evidence to establish whether or not activities result in the intended outcomes. We will also examine the extent to which each activity contributes towards meeting the overall objective PTS­­\_1: to reduce the achievement gap between students from deprived socio-economic backgrounds (IMD Q1-2) and more affluent socio-economic backgrounds (IMD 3-10) from 18.85% in 2022/23 to 6% in 2028/29.

We aim to generate evidence through a mixed methods approach using both quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post intervention change/difference compared to what might otherwise have happened (Crawford, et al 2017). Where possible for quantitative data, we plan to analyse data numerically and compare difference to ascertain if desired outcomes have been achieved. Pre and post surveys will play a key role as well as digital polls. While absolute outcomes are measurable quantifiably, qualitative data will be important in understanding why something may/may not be working as intended and how it can be improved. Also, we plan to use qualitative data as due to our small numbers, levels of statistical significance may not be achieved using solely quantitative data.

Dependent of the intervention activity and the questions of focus, qualitative data will be collected using a variety of tools such as interviews, focus groups, case studies, artefacts, capturing personal experiences/feelings/emotions through visual texts (e.g. images, drawings, videos), or direct observations. Creative evaluation may reflect on events, for example through the use of storyboarding.

Where we will use a range of methodologies both qualitatively and quantitatively for different intervention activities, we expect that the overall impact evidence against our objectives to be quantifiable (i.e. achievement data generated from our own management information systems.

Although we are aware that Type 3: Causality Evidence provides the greatest weighting in terms of validity, reliability and confidence levels, we do not consider this standard of evidence to be as appropriate in our context. Due to the present small numbers of our HE cohorts, we do not feel this is feasible in terms of performing random control trials (RCT). We expect that the small numbers of students that we presently experience, will limit our ability to reduce confounding study variables and therefore impact on the validity of any RCT study. Paired analysis (e.g. between socio-economic groups IMD 1-2 and 3-10) would also prove difficult with small cohort numbers. The impact of study drop-out would also be more detrimental with small numbers. With consideration of EDI, we wish to support all students in accessing the intervention activities, particularly those we will identify as deriving from target groups. Therefore, we would not choose to assign any of our students to a control group and limit their opportunities to succeed, particularly considering our small HE cohort at this time. See Evaluation Section later for more detail on learning form and dissemination of findings and our evaluation strategy.

### 4.4 Intervention Strategy 2

Objectives and targets: to reduce the achievement gap between young and mature students from 17.50% in 2022/23 to 2% in 2028/29. (Target PTS\_2)

Secondary Objective(s): PTS\_1 (IS1)

Risks to equality of opportunity: 1. Knowledge and Skills, 2. Information and Guidance, 3. Perception of HE, 5. Limited choice of course type and delivery mode 7. Insufficient Academic Support, 8. Mental Health, 10. Cost Pressures

#### 4.4.1 IS2.1 Raising Aspirations Taster Days for secondary schools (e.g. year 10)

Activity: Existing FE Taster Days will now link directly to raising aspirations around our HE pathways and related careers **(Enhanced activity).**

Inputs: Staff time: Academic staff (time and planning). Outreach Officer (development of resource linked to HE pathways).

Outcomes: Increased student perception of HE. Increased student confidence and aspiration for HE study

Cross Intervention: IS1 (This activity links directly to EORR Risks:1,2,3)

#### 4.4.2 IS2.2 GHWY/KC Collaborative Bespoke Events

Activity: KC have a history of delivering bespoke events designed to increase learners knowledge and aspirations of attending Higher Education. In collaboration with GHWY, these events include examples such as the Building Bridges into Engineering event where learners from local, targeted schools across multiple year groups take part in a series of workshops and challenges hosted at KC industry standard facilities **(Existing Activity)**

This work is funded until Sept 25 (GHWY collaboration). Should funding cease, an outreach officer post to succeed similar activity will be considered to engage both secondary and primary age children.

Inputs: Cost: staff time (academic staff, outreach officer, student ambassadors). Planning time. Cost of materials/prizes, catering. 3 events planned per year

Outcomes: Increase learners knowledge and aspirations and interactions with HE and related career opportunities whilst building confidence and communication skills.

Cross Intervention: IS1 (This activity links directly to EORR Risks: 1, 2, 3, 5)

#### 4.4.3 IS2.3 Partnerships to support pre-16 attainment raising: GHWY Uni Connect Attainment Raising Programme for y8-10 life cycle: raising attainment

Activity: The programme works with students from low-participation neighbourhoods who are predicted 4/5 across the majority of GCSE subjects and not taking part in any other attainment-raising programme, with a focus on those eligible for Free School Meals or from one of GHWY’s key under-represented groups (Males on free school meals, care-experienced, Black, Asian and minoritised ethnicities, SEND learners capable of academically achieving). Pupils are taught and practice key metacognitive and oracy skills to support their academic attainment.

Inputs: GHWY subscription fee and salary of Outreach Officer/GHWY KC Budget

Outcomes: Improved metacognition and attainment at GCSE

Cross intervention: IS1(This activity links directly to EORR Risks:1,2,3,5,7,8,10)

Total cost of IS2 over 4-year cycle: £85,682.

### 4.5 Summary of evidence base and rationale

We have conducted a literature review, consulted our own internal data, student body and narrative to provide our evidence base and rationale to support the planned intervention strategy activities detailed above (see Annex B).

### 4.6 Evaluation

For IS 2.1 and 2.2 see Evaluation for Intervention Strategy 1 above. A similar Type 2, mixed method approach will be implemented. With respect to IS2.3, GHWY’s Uni Connect funded Attainment-Raising programme is delivered by our Uni Connect-funded Outreach Officer. The programme works in target schools with individuals in receipt of Free School Meals (FSMs) and seeks to develop metacognitive skills to support attainment across a range of subjects. Our Uni Connect’s evaluation of this programme has two key strands: measuring improvements to learners’ metacognitive skills as a proxy for impact on attainment (pre and post surveys alongside qualitative data), and measuring long-term impact on learner attainment (baselining GCSE results against KS2 exam results using a matched cohort as a comparator group).

## 5. Whole Provider Approach

We understand the criticality in ensuring that our APP adopts a holistic approach to address the risks to equality of opportunity, and that the success of our APP and the achievement of our set targets is crucial to this. The engagement and involvement of a wide variety of staff across the KC community is clear through documentation of our Intervention Strategy activities (section 4). Academic curriculum, student support, learning resource (study skills), SEND, student experience and MIS staff, Senior Executive Leadership Teams (SELT), Wider Leadership Teams (WLT) and the GHWY Outreach team are all expected to play integral roles. Importantly the work of these teams is not mutually exclusive and there are occasions where some intervention strategies may require teams to work together for the common goal.

APP activity, updates and findings will also be a new agenda item of our already existing Student Association Meetings. Here we will consult with students and ensure the APP is a key item for our student voice.

Our APP is directly underpinned by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity policy. Although we are focussed on our two key targets to reduce the achievement gap between the least and most deprived students (PTS\_1) and young and mature students (PTS\_2) our work will always ensure that under-represented groups (URGs) (e.g. race, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability etc.) will always be considered. Indeed, some of the planned intervention strategies directly supports URGs, (IS1.1 Disability Support Allowance). This mindful inclusion of URGs is at the heart of our college values and pays due regard to the Equality Act (2010).

We work with GHWY across our whole institution. Our HE Quality Manager is a member of the Board of GHWY, which convenes senior and strategic representatives from across the member institutions to provide governance and strategic steer for the work of the partnership. Our HE Quality Manager is also a member of GHWY’s ‘Access and Participation Strategy Group’ (APSG) which convenes senior representatives to discuss and respond collectively to local and national issues, as well as maintain operational oversight of GHWY’s activity. Our SEND Manager also represents KC as a member of the Disabled Students Network which brings together staff across from other FE/HE providers dedicated to improving experiences and outcomes for disabled students.

GHWY brings together member institutions and stakeholders to ensure that in our local area:

* Individuals have equal opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills required to be accepted onto higher education courses that match their expectations

This is supported through GHWY’s Uni Connect funded Attainment-Raising programme, which is delivered by our Uni Connect-funded Outreach Officer. The programme works in target schools with individuals in receipt of Free School Meals and seeks to develop metacognitive skills to support attainment across a range of subjects. Continuation of this activity will depend on Uni Connect funding being available, and this activity remaining within scope.

* Individuals have equal opportunity to receive the information and guidance that will enable them to develop ambition and expectations, and to make informed choices about their higher education options.

This is supported through two separate initiatives: we fund a role within GHWY which delivers our ‘Care to Go Higher’ programme, and we host a Uni Connect Outreach Officer who is responsible for delivering ‘Go Higher In…’ days. Care to Go Higher includes a CPD programme for those who work with, support and advise care-experienced and estranged individuals. It is based on research evidence of a need for increased knowledge and experience of higher education pathways in order to better inform and encourage the young people in their care (Jackson et al, 2005) ‘Go Higher In…’ days each focus on a priority sector in West Yorkshire, and bring together a range of HEPs with different HE courses, qualifications and specialisms which are relevant to that particular sector, along with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, employers and other relevant stakeholders. They provide impartial information and advice on the range of careers available, and a range of education routes to reach them. Continuation of this activity will depend on Uni Connect funding being available, and this activity remaining within scope. ‘Go Higher In…’ sector-focused careers and education pathways days for Y7-12 are formerly known as ‘Collaborative Taster Days’. This initiative targets groups of students from low-participation neighbourhoods, with a focus on those eligible for Free School Meals or from one of GHWY’s key URGs (Males on free school meals, care-experienced, Black, Asian and minoritised ethnicities, and SEND learners). Outcome indicators are improved access to information about and knowledge of an increased range of possible future careers and higher education options (life cycle stage: access). Recent Go Higher days have included a STEM day at Leeds Beckett University involving our Engineering team. We have also hosted similar activity at our Engineering Centre for the last 2 years with our ‘Building Bridges’ day.

## 6.Student Consultation

Each HE programme early in the academic year is elected a student representative. Key responsibilities of the HE student representative is to attend Student Association Meetings, input HE Committee Meetings, listen to fellow students’ views, concerns and academic issues, feedback results of representations to fellow students and liaise with other student representatives.

23/24 Student Association Meetings with our HE Manager and HE Administrator have proven an invaluable forum for students to feedback their student and academic experience. This student discussion has been instrumental in providing rationale for and shaping our APP intervention activities (IS 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6). We are confident that this forum captures essential feedback from all HE Programmes, and moving forward Student Association Meetings 24/25 onwards will be a recurrent agenda point and facilitate discussion around the evaluation and impact of the APP in terms of our activities and targets.

Importantly, the diverse backgrounds of our HE student body ensure representation from URGs, with EDI considered throughout. As a result, the plan has been shaped by students from various backgrounds including groups protected by the Equality Act, 2010 and our APP target groups.

Our KC Student Union (SU) Executive team will play a key role in providing a forum where we can share updates on APP evaluation and impact activity and to seek continual views and opinions. Presently the SU Executive team consists of the SU President, EDI Officer, Events and Activities Officer, Environment and Sustainability Officer, Higher Education Officer and Communications Officer. We are also hopeful that our SU body will become actively involved in evaluation activity where appropriate.

Consultation with our Students' Union President has taken place, and our APP targets and activities were well received. Specific feedback was provided regarding certain activities, with discussions highlighting the added benefits of our initiatives in improving equality of opportunity. For instance, the Summer Bootcamps were recognised not only for their role in fostering academic skills but also for creating a supportive community and helping to alleviate potential anxieties prior to the start of the new academic year. Additionally, the recruitment of HE student ambassadors at these events, which was also an idea proposed by the Students' Union President, was welcomed as a positive step in raising aspirations and boosting confidence among new students.

HE Committee Meetings are held 3 times a year with Senior and Executive Leadership Teams. This will also provide a channel for student representatives to input thoughts and opinions around APP activity. We are presently electing a new Student Governor role, which we expect to take an active interest in APP activity.

## 7.Evaluation of the Plan

We fully appreciate the importance of evaluation in understanding whether or not our planned intervention activities are effectively addressing the risks to equality of opportunity.

We have reviewed the OfS standards of evidence to support and strengthen our evaluation plans and methodologies [Evaluation Tookit (officeforstudents.org.uk)](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/2923/access-and-participation-standards-of-evidence.pdf) and also consulted the OfS self-assessment tool to support our evaluation ([Standards of evidence and evaluation self-assessment tool - Office for Students](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/evaluation/standards-of-evidence-and-evaluation-self-assessment-tool/)). This self-assessment tool has proved invaluable in determining if our evaluation plans facilitate high quality evidence. It has also prompted with ways that we may strengthen our evaluation plan.

### 7.1 Strategic Context for Evaluation

Intervention strategies will commence in the 2025-26 academic year, and undertake monitoring and evaluation on an ongoing basis to understand whether our planned activities are achieving their intended outcomes. Changes to design and delivery of activities will be considered where required through monitoring of our plan.

An APP working group will be established to oversee the implementation of the planned activities and discuss the evaluation of outcomes. This will periodically report into HE Committee and Senior Executive Leadership team meetings, and Wider Leadership teams, as well as the Governing Body. We will also share findings with our GHWY collaborative partners at Access and Participation Strategy Group (APSG) meetings. We will also encourage the involvement of student representatives in our evaluation practice. Staff and student representatives will be supported with relevant training in Theory of Change and evaluation methods through our GHWY partners and other external organisations e.g. TASO.

Our investment in the development of our Management Information Systems (MIS) will also allow for some of the required monitoring and evaluation outputs. This will be vital in ensuring that HE achievement data/predicted outcomes are discussion points in Performance Management Reviews held with Senior Executive Leadership teams and drive our access and participation work.

### 7.2 Activity & Evaluation Design

Our activity design has been considered through review of the Access and Participation Standards of Evidence ([Evaluation Tookit (officeforstudents.org.uk)](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/2923/access-and-participation-standards-of-evidence.pdf). As discussed in section 4 we have prioritised Type 2 evidence to form our initial programme design and support us to determine how our planned intervention activities will contribute to the overall objective of our intervention strategies. Through understanding activity impact we will be able to respond accordingly and further tailor our study design.

We have taken a Theory of Change approach with our Intervention Strategies ensuring a clear rationale and evidence base for our planned activities that have defined outcomes. Over time we aim to continue to review and develop our Theory of Change through continual appreciation of widening participation literature. We also recognise the importance of our investment in developing and establishing our skills through external training e.g. TASO, to further support our activity and evaluation design.

As discussed in Section 4, we are employing a mixed methods evaluation design using quantitative and qualitative data. We feel this will provide a more holistic approach than solely relying on one method, and will support triangulation of findings. Also, to limit survey fatigue that is known to lead to low response rates, less reliable responses and bias (Porter, 2005), we intend to use more creative qualitative evaluation methods introduced to us by our GHWY partners at recent Theory of Change workshops.

Our small numbers do not lend well presently to Type 3 randomised controlled trials, yet we anticipate this method may be considered in future years with expected growth of our HE programmes. We also plan to gain insight from TASO’s guidance on impact evaluation with small numbers (TASO, n.d). Where our intervention activities are not confined to KC, we will rely on our external partners and their work in schools and communities i.e. GHWY to report activity impact.

### 7.3 Implementation

The implementation of our plan will rely on a whole provider approach, with key stakeholders convening periodically as part of our working group to manage the timeline of events. Critical discussions will be held to determine which activities are ‘working’ and which are not and to ensure all staff understand their roles and are equipped with the appropriate skills and feel supported. Appropriate processes will be in place to ensure effective data collation and subsequent interpretation and analysis. All evaluation methods will consider ethical principles (UK Evaluation Society, 2013) and comply with GDPR regulations (Information Commissioners Office, n.d).

### 7.4 Learning from and Dissemination of Findings

We are fully committed to contributing to the development of sector-wide knowledge through reporting of our evaluation via the OfS. We will share our findings at regular intervals at HE Committee and Senior Executive Leadership team meetings, and Wider Leadership teams, as well as with Governing Body and our GHWY collaborative partners at Access and Participation Strategy Group (APSG) meetings. These meetings will provide key forums to consider evaluation and impact and next steps. We will publish our findings on our website.

Regular communication across college of the outcomes of our APP activity and against our targets will provide a means to promote the importance of our access and participation activity beyond those that are directly involved. This platform will also allow for up-to date widening participation/URG research i.e. OfS/TASO headlines, to be shared and will further promote our whole provider approach. We also expect our communications to align and integrate with work of our EDI committee. We will also disseminate findings through the student’s union and representatives.

We will also engage with TASO and other relevant organisations in calls for evidence, learning at conferences and events and training opportunities. Through such opportunities we aim to strengthen our skills base in evaluation and promote our culture of evaluation.

## 8. Provision of information to students

KC works hard to ensure all students, current and prospective, have access to clear, transparent, and up-to-date information, advice, and guidance about the cost of their HE experience and the financial support (e.g. bursaries) available to them. Information will be provided in various formats to reach students from diverse backgrounds, ensuring as many students as possible have the opportunity to consider higher-level study with us.

The KC website is the main source of information for prospective applicants, including course details, entry requirements, tuition fees, and financial support. These will also be available in the printed Higher Education and Higher Skills prospectus and at open events throughout the year.

Kirklees College offers a number of funds so all students, but specifically those from our target groups, can fully engage with their studies.

### 8.1 Progression Bursaries

The college will continue to award Progression Bursaries to students progressing within the college from a Level 3 programme on to a full-time Higher Education programme. A phased cash payment of £500 is made in the first year of study only. Students must have successfully completed a Level 3 programme at college that is appropriate to allow progression to a full-time Higher Education programme. This award will be available to Kirklees College home students in receipt of the full HE maintenance loan or student support grant.

Many of our students progressing from one of our level 3 programmes to a HE course of study, fall into the ‘young’ demographic (<21 years) and therefore this bursary is supportive of students within this target group.

The Progression Bursary, and all other bursaries that require students to be in receipt of the full HE maintenance loan or student support grant ([Student Finance Maintenance Loans 2024 - Save the Student](https://www.savethestudent.org/student-finance/maintenance-loans.html)), are supportive of students from our target group (low SES/IMD 1-2). This is due to one of the key eligibility criteria for the HE maintenance loan being household income, and our understanding of statistical evidence of how low-income households disproportionately reside in areas ranked in IMD 1-2, thus facing multiple challenges linked to health, education, and housing (Office for Students, 2021).

**Local Student Bursaries.** This bursary will target local students accepted on to a Higher Education programme at the College with a permanent home address in the local area (all West Yorkshire postcodes). A phased cash payment of £500 is made in the first year of study only. This award will be available to home students in receipt of the full HE maintenance loan or student support grant.

As discussed in our Introduction section, Kirklees district has areas of significant deprivation. Around 64.5% of the college’s 16-18 students and 67.5% of our 19+ students are in the three bands of highest deprivation (IMD). The local student bursary will also support any students of low SES in the wider West Yorkshire region.

### 8.2 STEM Bursaries

This bursary will be available to any home student on Engineering or Process Manufacturing programmes only. A phased cash payment of £500 will be made during each year of study (excluding any repeat year). This award will be available to home students in receipt of the full HE maintenance loan or student support grant. Students receiving this bursary are not eligible for any other bursary outlined in this Access Agreement.

### 8.3 Widening Access Bursaries

These bursaries are available to the following student groups:

8.4 Care Leaver Bursary

This bursary will offer support to any home student during each year of study (excluding any repeat year) and will be available to students who have left local authority care in the two years prior to enrolment on the first year of study, irrespective of postcode. A phased cash payment of £1000 is made during each year of study. Attendance must be 85% or above during the first the first three months on programme (other than mitigating circumstances).

8.5 Full-time Carer Bursary

This bursary will offer support to any home student during each year of study (excluding any repeat year) and will be available to applicants who have full-time carer responsibilities. A phased cash payment of £1000 is made during each year of study. This award will be available to home students in receipt of the full HE maintenance loan or student support grant.

8.6 Access to HE Diploma Bursary

This bursary will offer support to students during their first year of study and will be available to students who have success fully completed an Access to HE Diploma programme. Students must have successfully completed an Access programme that is appropriate to allow progression to a Higher Education programme. A phased cash payment of £1000 is made during the first year of study only. This award will be available to home students in receipt of the full HE maintenance loan or student support grant.

KC is committed to providing the highest standards of support to learners who have a disability or learning difficulty. As documented in our Intervention strategies, we also plan to provide support for students with their DSA applications and monitoring of DSA funded interventions throughout the academic year.

In addition, we provide a free breakfast each morning for all our students at the refectory in their centre of study, further supporting students identified by our target groups.

Financial support details are available on our website [Financial Support - Kirklees College](https://www.kirkleescollege.ac.uk/financial-support/), via telephone, email, and financial support applications. Information about financial support will also be included in pre-enrolment materials sent to applicants (including support for DSA applications).

As a small HE provider, we can build relationships with prospective students and offer bespoke support where required. We will also place a copy of our Access and Participation Plan on our website, with a link to the OfS website when published. The full plan will be shared with the Student’s Union when approved, and our HE Quality Manager will deliver information sessions for current students.

## 9. Annex A: Assessment of Performance

Our small HE student numbers have suppressed the OfS dashboard data, therefore analysis in terms of socio-economic status, ethnicity, age, disability has proven difficult. Due to small numbers, it has not been appropriate to examine intersections of student characteristics or disaggregate into smaller groups. With such we have performed our data analysis using internal data and compared this to sector-wide data. The two identified target groups are socio-economic status (deprivation, specifically IMD 1-2 group) and age (specifically, young).

### 9.1 Deprivation

A 5-year trend from 2018/19 to 2022/23 has generally shown that students from more affluent IMD 3-10 areas to have higher achievement than students from IMD 1-2 areas. In 2022/23 this achievement gap reached a threshold of significance with students from IMD 1-2 and 3-10 showing achievement of 60% and 78.85% respectively with an achievement gap of 18.85%. Although students from both IMD 1-2 and 3-10 both show significantly higher pass rates (88% and 95% for IMD 1-2 and 3-10 respectively) and have done consistently over the last 5 years, the achievement gap between these two socio-economic groups provides the main rationale for deprivation group being one of the main targets/objectives of our APP.

In terms of socio-economic group status, from 2018-19 to 2021-22 our data has evidenced a decrease from 32.4% to 19.3% in students from IMD 1-2 areas accessing HE on a ‘part-time’ basis. It is to be considered if this is a post-COVID impact, whereby less people from more deprived backgrounds consider HE to be less accessible. Whilst an increase from 67.6% to 80.7% from more affluent (IMD 3-5) areas accessing HE has been observed. In contrast, sector-wide data has shown over the same timeframe an increase from 38.1% to 40.3% in students from IMD 1-2 areas accessing HE on a part-time basis. This is a difference between our own data and sector-wide data of -5.7% in 2018-19 and -21% (2021-22), emphasising our continued decease in access to HE for ‘part-time’ students from a IMD1-2 areas in contrast to sector wide data. In contrast, compared to sector-wide data, our college shows a percentage increase from 26.1% (2018-19) to 28.12% (2021-22) in terms of students from IMD 1-2 areas accessing HE on a ‘full-time’ basis, which is more comparable with sector wide data (28.2%, 2021-22, IMD 1-2).

We are aware that access to HE of students from more deprived areas on a part-time basis may serve as valid evidence-based performance target. Particularly, when we know that the access gap between Free School Meal (FSM) eligible and non-FSM eligible pupils has increased to its highest level recorded in 21-22 (Widening Participation, 2023) (Note: pupils are considered disadvantaged if they are eligible for FSMs at the age of 15 or in the previous 6 years before). Yet we have chosen to focus on supporting the quality of our HE provision within this 4-year APP, in terms of reducing the achievement gap between students from IMD 1-2 and 3-10 areas based on more significant data in terms of our low numbers. Yet we believe that some of the planned intervention activities although designed to reduce this achievement gap between deprivation groups will also have a positive impact on increasing the part-time numbers of students from IMD1-2 areas accessing HE and we welcome the increase in student numbers i.e. development of new HTQs.

It is likely that more courses offered part-time will allow students to work in paid employment alongside their study providing more financial stability for themselves and their families. We are committed to the development our HTQ offer that will allow a more employer-responsive model to create flexible and modular/unitised qualifications to meet local need. We anticipate the HTQs to also be a more accessible and attractive HE offer with the advent of the LLE in January 2026 which will allow the financial means for more students to Access HE.

### 9.2 Age

A 5-year trend from 2018/19 to 2022/23 has consistently shown mature students (21+ years) to have higher achievement than young students. In 2022/23 this achievement gap reached a threshold of significance with young and mature students showing achievement of 62.5% and 80% respectively with an achievement gap of 17.50%. Although both young and mature students show higher pass rates (83% and 100% for young and mature students respectively) and have done consistently over the last 5 years, the achievement gap between these two age groups provides the main rationale for age group being the second main target/objective of our APP.

It may be that mature students feel more invested and have different motivations (OfS, 2021) and more at risk by non-completion compared to young students which contributes to their better achievement than younger counterparts. Although, our own data tells us many of our young students progressing from our level 3 programmes into our HE provision often have low entry grades/starting points – this rationale is explored further in Annex B.

Over recent years our access data has been comparable with sector-wide data in terms of age for part-time provision. As would be expected more mature students access part-time HE courses than young. In 2020-21 and 2021-22 our data shows 87.5% mature and 12.5% young students to access HE on a part time basis, with only a 0.1% and 0.4% difference compared to sector-wide data in 2020-21 and 2021-22 respectively. This is also consistent with OfS (2021), showing how more mature students access HE in FE in institutes compared to young students.

Yet our full-time provision has seen a different picture compared to sector wide data. Sector-wide data has shown from 2016-17 to 2020-21 each year approximately 2/3 of students accessing HE are young compared to 1/3 mature. This may be expected considering the sector to include many traditional Universities. Whereas our HE in FE setting at KC, has experienced much lower proportions of young students accessing HE courses from 2016-17 to 2020-21 (between 26.4% and 43.2%) compared to the sector wide picture. This may be explained by the more common route progression of many of our level 3 students to local/national universities. Yet more recently (2021-22) this has aligned more with the sector wide picture (Kirklees Data: young: 71.8% mature: 28.2% Difference to sector: 0.8%). Yet data is interpreted cautiously due to the low numbers of our HE provision.

We are aware that access to HE for young students on a ‘part-time’ basis may serve as valid evidence-based performance target. Yet again, we have chosen to focus on supporting the quality of our HE provision within this 4-year APP, in terms of reducing the achievement gap between young and mature students. Although, we believe that some of the planned intervention activities (i.e. Personal Development Tutor sessions) although aim to reduce this achievement gap between this demographic, will also have a positive impact on increasing access to HE part-time students, particularly considering the growth of our more flexible HTQ programmes.

### 9.3 Ethnicity

We are aware that Black Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students are an under-represented group that provide a risk of equal opportunity for access and participation in HE (EORR). The HE success/achievement gap between white and black is widely recognised (UUK & NUS, 2019; TASO, 2023). Our summary and analysis of our internal data shows a 5-year trend from 2018/19 to 2022/23 whereby white students have consistently higher achievement than black Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students. Though the numbers of BAME students is too small to draw any firm conclusions, the achievement gap between these two groups is narrowing. Specifically, since 2019/20 to 2022/23 the achievement gap has reduced from 33.8% to 8.7%. Due to the continual reduction in percentage achievement over this time, ethnicity has not been considered a target in this APP. Despite this, BAME students will also continue to benefit from the planned theory of change interventions.

Although our numbers are too small to draw firm conclusions, a comparison analysis has been performed looking at sector-wide and KC specific access data. In terms of ethnicity, from 2018-19 to 2021-22 our data has evidenced a 4% increase in BAME students accessing HE on a ‘part-time’ basis from 15.3% to 19.3%. This is a difference of +1.4% (2018-19) and +4.7% (2021-22) compared to sector-wide data.

In contrast, from 2018-19 to 2021-22 our data has evidenced a 7.4% decrease in BAME students accessing HE on a ‘full-time’ basis from 33% to 25.6%. This is a difference of +1.7% (2018-19) and -9.2% (2021-22) compared to sector-wide data. This is also in contrast to nationwide data (Widening Participation, 2023), where Black students have seen the greatest increase in the proportion entering HE from 44.1% in 2019 to 63.5% in 21-22. We interpret from this trend that part-time provision may provide a better offer for some students, particularly students of BAME origin based on these findings. Again, the development of our HTQ provision offering more subjects and a more flexible/modular delivery model over the next 3 years may provide a more attractive offer.

### 9.4 Disclosure of a disability/difficulty or health problem

We are aware that disabled students are an under-represented group that provide a risk of equal opportunity for access and participation in HE (EORR). Also, we are very aware of the increased disclosure of disability over the last 10 years, specifically a 105% increase in applicants sharing disability information, driven largely by a steep increase in disclosure of mental health conditions (up 453%) and social, behavioural or communication impairments (up 249%) (UCAS 2022).

Our summary and analysis of our data shows a 5-year trend from 2018/19 to 2022/23 whereby students who have not disclosed a disability, difficulty or health problem have consistently higher achievement than those that have students. Though the numbers of students who disclose a disability/difficulty or health problem is too small to draw any firm conclusions, the achievement gap between these two groups has narrowed greatly from 25.9% in 2020/21 to 0.3% in 2022/23. Due to the continual reduction in percentage achievement gap over this time, disclosure of a disability, difficulty or health problem has not been considered a target in this APP. Despite this, disabled students will also continue to benefit from our Theory of Change interventions (e.g. Disability Support Allowance Information and Guidance) that are designed to target SES and age.

When comparing the Access of students that disclose a disability with those that have not disclosed a disability on to a HE course at KC with the sector-wide data there is a general difference in trend between our part-time and full-time provisions.

For part-time provision, the percentage of disabled students accessing HE at KC since 2016-17 has been less than sector wide data. More recently, 2021-22 sector wide data saw 19.7% of disabled students accessing HE compared to 8% at KC (Difference -11.8%). Yet in contrast, our full-time provision, the percentage of disabled students accessing HE at KC since 2016-17 has been more than sector wide data. More recently, 2021-22 sector wide data saw 17.4% of disabled students accessing HE compared to 35.9% at KC (Difference 18.5%). Considering that the achievement gap between students that disclose a disability, difficulty or health problem and those that do not is narrowing and we have experienced a percentage increase in the access of disabled students on full time courses, we are confident that we a supporting this under-represented group well to achieve and will continue to do so through our targeted interventions in this APP (e.g. support from Preparation for Adulthood Coach).

### 9.5 Gender

We are aware that gender can provide a risk of equal opportunity for access and participation (EORR). Our summary and analysis of our data shows a 5-year trend from 2018/19 to 2022/23 whereby female students have consistently higher achievement than male students (except 2021/22 where male achievement was higher than female achievement). This may be associated with the fact that more females enter HE at 19+ than males (Widening Participation in HE, 2023). Our achievement gap between males and females has narrowed from 14.3% in 2018/19 to 3.89% in 2022/23. Due to the continual reduction in percentage achievement gap over this time, gender has not been identified as a main target in our APP. Despite this, male students who are generally shown to have lower achievement will also continue to benefit from the theory of change interventions that are designed to target SES and age. Particularly, KC through our membership with GHWY, is contributing to supporting the access and participation of boys through outreach attainment raising activities with local schools aimed at boys who are eligible for FSMs. Males in receipt of FSMs are a known under-represented group known nationally to be affected by a risk of equality of opportunity to HE. These students may not have equal opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills to be accepted onto HE courses that match their ambitions.

### 9.6 Care Leavers and other groups who experience barriers in Higher Education

KC collects data on Care Leavers but with such small numbers, quantitative analysis would be difficult. We are aware that Care Leavers are an under-represented group with national data showing that just 14% of care leavers under the age of 19 progress on to Higher Education compared to 47% of all other children (Breaking the Care Ceiling, 2023). Although, this is not a main target of our APP. We have a dedicated team to supporting our care leavers to achieve their full potential. Our Care Leaver Covenant supports care leavers in accessing higher education (HE) and succeeding throughout their academic journey.

* **Access to HE**: We assist with the application process and offer campus experience opportunities to help care leavers navigate the transition into HE.
* **Success in HE**: To ensure well-being and academic success, we provide tailored support throughout their studies, including well-being services, transition guidance, and training for staff to better understand the unique challenges faced by care leavers.
* **Progression from HE**: We also offer employment support to help care leavers successfully transition from education to the workforce.

This structured approach ensures care leavers receive the guidance and support they need from the start of their HE journey to their career progression.

Although we aware of other under-represented groups that pose a risk to equality of opportunity to HE such as people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, Refugees, Children of military families, we have such small HE numbers that analysis of performance is presently difficult.

## 10. 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.

We reviewed extensive literature to support our intervention strategies and used the Type 1 Narrative evaluation (OfS Access and Participation Standards of Evidence, 2023) method to support justification of our activities for addressing inequality of opportunity. Below, we provide an evidence-based rationale supporting the intervention strategies that shape our Theory of Change.

### 10.1 Intervention Strategy 1

To reduce the achievement gap between students from deprived socio-economic backgrounds (IMD Q1-2) and more affluent socio-economic backgrounds (IMD 3-10) from 18.85% in 2022/23 to 6% in 2028/29 (PTS\_1).

Our intervention strategy aims to reduce the achievement gap between IMD1-2 and IMD 3-10 groups and therefore improve the social mobility of disadvantaged groups. This is in line with the recommendation for there to be a national strategy and priority to close attainment gaps (Social Mobility, 2023). Statistics are compelling in evidencing disadvantage where 62% of non-disadvantaged high attainers achieved five or more grade 7-9s at GCSE in 2021, compared to 40% of disadvantaged high attainers. TASO’s Rapid Review of Literature ([TASO, 2023)](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/8080/taso-rapid-review.pdf) also highlights in 2018-19, 24.7% of FSM-eligible pupils gained at least a grade 5 in both English and mathematics GCSEs compared to 49.9% of other pupils.

As we state earlier in our introduction, KC has a local demographic which allows us the privilege to promote social mobility. Many of our students join us with low starting points in terms of GCSE, indicative of social disadvantage. We are also aware of the impact on potential earnings through disadvantage. Research suggests an earning gap of approximately 10% between students from the most disadvantaged and the most advantaged backgrounds (TASO, The Value of HE, 2023). We believe our intervention strategies will support the narrowing of this earnings gap and contribute to improving social mobility in our region.

Our data tells us that students from more deprived areas do not achieve as well as those from more affluent areas. The EORR sets out clear rationale as to why this may be. This may be associated with students in more deprived areas being disadvantaged by not having access to a high-quality education based on where they live and the school they attend in contrast to their counterparts. This may create disadvantage in terms the knowledge and skills they acquire, information and guidance to make informed decisions and choices, and their perceptions of HE. In terms of perception of HE, students from IMD 1-2 more deprived areas (even with appropriate grades and guidance) may not feel able to apply to higher education due to financial (cost pressures) or familial circumstances (EORR, 2023).

The gap between rich and poor students in HE participation widened during the 1990s. Since 1994/5, children from poor neighbourhoods have become relatively less likely to attend university compared to those from richer neighbourhoods (Galindo et al, 2020). Our intervention strategies aim to improve knowledge and skills, information and guidance, perceptions of HE (IS 1.2, 1.4, 1.5 1.6) with our FE student body and raising aspirations and attainment work with local schools (2.1) and through our partnership with GHWY (IS 2.2, 2.3).

There is much literature to indicate that students coming from more deprived backgrounds face greater challenges in HE than student from less deprived areas. Recent analysis from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) demonstrate ongoing, persisting gaps in educational attainment between pupils from deprived backgrounds and their more affluent peers once they reach university. Here HESA demonstrates a strong positive linear correlation (r = 0.889) with HE attainment rising with an increase from decile 1 to 10 (1 representing the most deprived decile) (HESA, 2023). Other studies have shown other factors that differ dependent on socio-econonic background. Students from IMD1 areas experiencing additional mental health needs (Cullinan, 2020) and being less well prepared for HE and integration in HE being more difficult than students from more affluent counterparts (The Conversation.com 2020). In a comprehensive review of the socio-economic literature it was found that early withdrawal is lower for academically and socially integrated students (Aina et al 2020). The EORR suggests that those with a risk of mental health issues, nationally are more likely to be from low household background and have a disability, providing clear rationale for our enhanced DSA intervention activity (IS1.1).

Our own internal narrative tells us that not all our HE students eligible for DSA actually apply for DSA and have consequently struggled to achieve. Eligible students may not apply for DSA due to lack of awareness, perceived stigma, complexity of the application process, concerns about delays, perceived lack of need, financial misconceptions, privacy worries, negative past experiences, and psychological barriers (National Audit Office, 2019; DfE, 2021). Addressing these barriers requires a targeted approach, clear communication, which we aim to provide in our planned intervention activity (IS1.1, IS1.6) to ensure that all eligible students are aware of and feel comfortable accessing the support available to them.

There is evidence suggesting that a higher proportion of students with SEND come from more deprived areas. Several studies and reports have highlighted a correlation between SES and the prevalence of SEND among young people (The Sutton Trust, 2019; Sullivan et al, 2013). This literature in addition to the EORR stating that disabled as well students from low household incomes may not have equal opportunity to receive information advice and guidance, also providing further evidenced-based rationale for activity IS1.1.

Offering specific academic workshops and one to one support (IS 1.2) we believe will support knowledge and skills development, achievement and reduce the achievement gap between socio-economic groups. It is known that there is a strong association between study strategies and academic attainment (Dunlosky et al, 2013). Therefore, using tutoring as a mechanism to enhance how students study (e.g. developing academic writing through paraphrasing workshops (IS1.2) provides an evidence-based approach to raising attainment (The Brilliant Club, 2022).

The literature here is also supported by our own internal narrative. We recognise the need to develop such an intervention activity from our initial findings from a pilot study ‘Moving on Up’. We collated 48 survey responses that asked HE lecturers how they thought they embedded specific academic and personal development skills. In terms of academic writing: 56.6% said ‘always’, 39.6% said sometimes and 4.2% said don’t. This provides us with further rationale to support students with academic skills (IS1.2). Our data also tells us that many of our young HE students progress from our level 3 courses with low entry grades/starting points. Although this makes our courses more accessible for our students compared to other local and national HE institutes setting higher entry requirements, they may face greater academic challenges. We feel this may be a significant contributory factor leading to the lower achievement of young students compared to their mature counterparts.

Additionally, as part of our HE quality processes we regularly hold Student Association Meetings (SEMs). Through this student voice forum, we have received invaluable feedback (23/24) that enhanced support with academic skills would be welcomed (IS1.2).

Although 27/28 96% of students (in a survey conducted 23/24) were satisfied/very satisfied with the quality of teaching, as well as with support from teaching staff, we would like to further develop our Quality Review Process to focus more on ‘formative assessment’ and provide CPD where there is a need (IS1.4). The rationale being to improve first time submission measures/student achievement, particularly achievement of students of low SES. Although not consistent across all our HE programmes, we are aware that SEMs in 2023/4 have documented the request for more detailed and developmental feedback with more guidance on how to improve. There is widespread agreement that formative assessment and feedback should feature substantially within course design and delivery (OfS, 2019). BERA (2021) also states how formative assessment and feedback in HE is a valuable approach to supporting student performance and more evidence-informed approaches to teaching and learning is recommended. This activity also aligns with our new Teaching Excellence Framework, with one of the 5 pillars of excellence being assessment.

Our planned bespoke Personal Development/GHWY activity (IS1.6) aims to support all our students at all levels to develop the necessary skills to be successful in HE such metacognition, problem solving and communication skills. This new activity involving a collaboration with our GHWY outreach officer and PDTs relies on a wealth of activity resources provided by our GHWY partners [(GHWY, 2023, Teachers, Carers and Advisors Resources)](https://gohigherwestyorks.ac.uk/resources/teachers-carers-advisors/key-downloads-workbooks-and-tools/) that have shown validated results (Education Endowment Foundation).

There is significant evidence and research that suggests student bursaries can alleviate cost pressures, improve mental health, and support academic achievement in HE. The National Union of Students (NUS) indicate that financial pressures are a significant concern for students, impacting both their mental health and academic success. Bursaries and grants are highlighted as essential tools for reducing these pressures and improving student outcomes (**National Union of Students, 2012). As well,** the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) has conducted research showing a positive correlation between financial support and student retention and success. They argue that bursaries can be particularly effective for students from low-income backgrounds, who might otherwise struggle to finance their education (Hillman, 2015). More recently Moores and Burgess (2022) investigated the impact of financial support, specifically bursaries, on the retention rates of students from lower-income households in the UK. They provide evidence that financial support can significantly improve retention, particularly for those students who might otherwise struggle to afford higher education. The findings underscore the importance of targeted financial aid in promoting equity and supporting academic success among economically disadvantaged students (See Annex D for our bursary investment).

As stated in the indications of risk as defined within the EORR, cost pressures (risk 10) may affect a student’s ability to complete their course or obtain a good grade. This may be attributed to several factors including some students undertaking more paid work than is feasible alongside full-time study, students having to support families. Therefore, if we can alleviate to some extent the cost pressure which we know from the EORR, nationally to more likely affect students from low household income, through bursary payment, then we believe this to impact positively on achievement of those from more deprived areas (IMD 1-2).

KC offers a number of funds to support all students to fully engage with their studies. These include Progression, Local Student, STEM, Widening Access (i.e. Care Leaver/Full-time Carer) bursaries and an Access to HE Diploma bursary offered to students who progress to our HE provision following successful completion of one of our Access to HE Level 3 diplomas. Bursary payments are subject to attendance threshold of 85% being met and timely assessment, so further supporting achievement. Full details may be found on our college webpage.

Similarly, the EORR identifies limited choice of course type and delivery mode as a barrier to HE. This may be attributed to people of low SES not having the flexibility to study full time. There has been much research documented around conflict between work and study. Callender (2008) found that students who work long hours are less likely to achieve high academic outcomes and are more likely to experience stress and exhaustion, having a detrimental impact on academic success. Another key factor may be the need for those of low SES to balance work and family commitments with education (Perna & Titua, 2005). We envisage that our growth plan (See Annex D) including the development of more HTQ programmes from 25/26 will create more flexible modular/part-time qualifications to support students of low SES. Cost pressures may also be alleviated with the advent of the LLE in January 2026.

### 10.2 Intervention Strategy 2

To reduce the achievement gap between young and mature students from 17.50% in 2022/23 to 2% in 2028/29. (Target PTS\_2)

Although our main targets address ‘success’, we feel our outreach activity (IS2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 1.5) also contributes to the ‘access’ component of the lifecycle. Hosting secondary aged children (Year 10) visits at FE colleges, where early exposure to these educational environments can significantly influence students' aspirations towards both Further and Higher Education (Harrison and Waller, 2017; Crawford and Greaves, 2015). These visits help demystify the transition to post-16 education, offering students a clearer view of future opportunities and fostering a positive outlook on continuing their education. By engaging with the FE college setting and interacting with current students and staff, Year 10 students, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, can build confidence, challenge stereotypes, and develop a greater awareness of how FE can serve as a stepping stone to HE. This early exposure supports informed decision-making and can inspire students to aim higher, making HE a more attainable and desirable goal, and provides a clear evidence-based rationale for our intervention strategies (IS2.1, 2.2).

A significant part of our Outreach Officer role is in supporting the Pre-16 Attainment Raising Programme presently funded until Sep 25 by GHWY. Much of the activity that facilitates this is pre-attainment work is an existing collaboration or takes inspiration from the Go Higher West Yorkshire Uni Connect programme delivered in West Yorkshire. It is part of our strategy to work in partnership in our local area via GHWY to undertake access and participation work. GHWY is a formal consortium of diverse HE providers which we fund to enable collaboration on reducing inequalities in access to and success in higher education, for individuals who experience inequality of opportunity. GHWY’s theory of change is that if people, particularly those who experience inequality of opportunity, can get access to information about the whole range of higher education options available to them, it will support them to enrol and succeed in higher education.

GHWY undertake a variety of methods in order to capture and evaluate the impact of the activities they deliver. Proven impact from the GHWY Think and Go Higher Attainment Raising programme are detailed below:

* Learners identified improvements to their skills in organising and linking information
* Learners identified the value of debating skills in and outside of school, making connections between oral debating skills and developing analytical thinking in written work.
* Learners self-reported an improvement in their grades and revision skills, highlighting that collaborating with other pupils outside of the typical classroom environment enhanced their communication skills.

Key influences for the activity that GHWY deliver comes from a variety of places. The local labour market information from organisations such as the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and detail from Progression Officers in schools provides influence for the Go Higher in Days whilst other influences on GHWY outcome framework (figure 1). These influences and evidence-based evaluation findings result in the GHWY Outcomes Framework (figure 2). This framework details the programme outcomes that GHWY aim to achieve through the delivery of their various programmes, resources and collaborations with local providers.

### 10.3 Core Evidence Underpinning the Outcomes Framework

#### 10.3.1 ‘Possible Selves’ Theory

Originally conceptualised by Markus and Nurius, the theory that individuals envisage a range of possible self-identities has been developed by Harrison who has articulated how young people’s formulations of self-identity impact on decision-making about their future and the importance of supporting this process.

#### 10.3.2 Cultural Capital Theory

Bourdieu’s classic theory outlining the power differentials between different social groups has been applied to the HE context by the NERUPI Network, emphasising the importance of ‘habitus’ and cultural capital in young people’s decision making about their future.

#### 10.3.3 Impact of Metacognitive Strategies on Attainment

The Education Endowment Foundation has evaluated many metacognition interventions and found them to be a high-impact, low-cost approach to improving the attainment of disadvantaged learners. They estimate the equivalent of 7+ months of academic progress as a result of developing metacognitive skills.

## 11. Figure: 1 Core evidence underpinning the GHWY Outcomes Framework

GHWY activity inspires our own internal activity (IS1.6 Personal Development Tutor/GHWY collaboration). Each component of the above framework can be linked to the EORR as shown below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Intended Programme Outcomes** | **EORR Risks** |
| Building Knowledge | 1, 2, 3, 5 |
| Developing Skills | 1, 7, 8 |
| Facilitating Learner Cognition | 1, 2, 7, 8 |
| Providing Experience | 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 |
| Enabling Relational Process | 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10  |

(Risk 1: Knowledge and Skills, Risk 2: Information and Guidance, Risk 3: Perception of HE, Risk 5: Limited choice of course type and delivery mode, Risk 7: Insufficient Academic Support, Risk 8: Mental Health, Risk 10: Cost Pressures)

## 12. Figure 2: Go Higher West Yorkshire Outcomes Framework

The framework can be found here:<https://gohigherwestyorks.ac.uk/resource/ghwy-outcomes-framework/>

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