

The North East Collaborative Outreach Programme and FutureMe Impact Review 2017-2018

universities

Durham University
Newcastle University
Northumbria University
University of Sunderland
Teesside University

colleges

Bishop Auckland College
Cleveland College of Art and Design
Darlington College
Derwentside College
East Durham College
Gateshead College
Hartlepool College of Further Education
Middlesbrough College
New College Durham
Newcastle College
Northumberland College
Prior Purglove and Stockton Sixth Form College
Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College
Redcar and Cleveland College
Stockton Riverside College
Sunderland College
Tyne Coast College



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welcome



"I am pleased to introduce this report setting out the activity, impact and achievements of the North East Collaborative Outreach Programme (NECOP) in 2017-2018. We are really proud to be part of a strong and innovative regional partnership of universities, further education colleges and schools, focused on improving the life chances of young people in the North East. By working together we have extended our reach and offered more opportunities to more students to engage, support and encourage them to make informed decisions about their future."

Lucy Backhurst, Chair, North East Collaborative Outreach Programme

Director of Student Recruitment, Admissions and Progress, Newcastle University



"Welcome to this report on the region-wide work that the North East universities and colleges are doing to support young people to progress to higher education as part of the North East Collaborative Outreach Programme. As both a stepping stone for young people into higher education and a destination for higher education study, colleges have an integral role to play in increasing progression and I am pleased that all North East colleges are delivering innovative and exciting activity to support young people in making informed decisions about their future. The work going on in both colleges and universities has created an invaluable offer for young people in the North East and we are proud of the progress made so far."

John Widdowson, Vice Chair, North East Collaborative Outreach Programme

Principal and Chief Executive, New College Durham

NECOP and Higher Education Progression in the North East

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The North East Collaborative Outreach Programme (NECOP) is a collaboration of all of the universities and colleges in the North East of England working together to make a rapid improvement to higher education progression rates.

NECOP is working with young people in areas where progression to higher education is low, and lower than expected given key stage 4 attainment. This work is part of the National Collaborative Outreach Programme funded by the Office for Students.

Through its FutureMe programme NECOP represents all higher education progression routes and delivers impartial advice and support to raise awareness and understanding of higher education for young people and their key influencers.

The North East has a range of universities and colleges where young people can study higher education qualifications, offering a breadth of different course types, qualification levels, subject choice and learner experience. The work of NECOP to support more young people to access these opportunities is essential.

2017 UCAS entry rates showed that the North East increased its proportion of 18 year olds entering higher education by 1.3%, but despite this increase the overall entry rate for 18 year olds in the North East was only 30.3% (second lowest in England only to the South West and equal to the East Midlands) compared to 41.8% in London.¹

While absolute numbers of 18 year old applicants have dropped across England in the 2018 cycle, the North East saw the highest drop in 18 year old applicants at the June application deadline (7%) against the 2017 cycle compared to any other area of England.²

¹ UCAS End of Cycle report 2017: Patterns by geography, <https://www.ucas.com/file/137236/download?token=LtrRkIaK>.

² UCAS June deadline analysis 2018: Domicile, <https://www.ucas.com/file/177181/download?token=Qv2kQZYj>.

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We hope that the work NECOP began in the 2017-2018 academic year will make a dramatic change in the historical patterns of low progression to higher education in the North East. As we are working with students in year 9 upwards, it will take time to see the longer term impact but our intention is to make a positive change amongst young people in the region who may not currently be considering higher education. A key part of this work is ensuring that young people and their influencers have access to enhanced information to fully understand the wide range of higher education qualifications available and the impact that obtaining higher level skills can have on a young person's future.

The FutureMe Programme

2017-2018

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FutureMe is the programme of activity delivered by the North East Collaborative Outreach Programme (NECOP) across the region. It was officially launched in January 2017 and the activity it delivers to young people, parents, carers and teachers is impartial, reliable and focused on helping young people make the best decisions for them and their future. This section covers some of the highlights from our main programme in the 2017-2018 academic year.

FutureMe in Schools

In the 2017-2018 academic year, FutureMe Project Co-ordinators and Higher Education (HE) Ambassadors worked in target schools³ to implement the programme and supported schools in making the most of what was on offer to their students. Key activities included:

- **Online attainment and aspiration raising tutoring for students in years 10 and 11**
This was delivered to students through a secure online portal which allowed current undergraduate mentors to guide young people through Maths and English GCSE content created by outstanding teachers. The undergraduate mentors also worked with young people through this portal to raise their aspirations related to higher education.
- **HE Ambassador sessions**
Our team of HE Ambassadors delivered sessions in schools on topics including Student Finance, Making Choices and Revision. These sessions were delivered in classrooms or assemblies and, as recent graduates, our HE Ambassadors acted as role models to allow young people to access information about higher education from a source they could relate to.
- **Face to face and small group mentoring for students in year 9**
Undergraduate mentors spent time with young people in school in small groups and as individuals to work through activities and conversations to inspire students to think about their futures and give them the confidence to make decisions about their education.
- As well as these core activities young people were also engaged in thinking about higher education and their futures through **motivational speakers, theatre group performances** and opportunities for schools to **visit higher education campuses.**

³ Target schools are those that support young people who reside in the postcode areas identified by the Office for Students as having low progression to higher education generally, and particularly low progression in relation to key stage 4 attainment.

FutureMe in Colleges

All of the colleges in the North East support young people who live in NECOP target areas and each college developed their own action plan to deliver FutureMe activity to the NECOP students in their own institutions. Over the last academic year 37 FTE equivalent FutureMe staff were put in place across the college network to support young people with higher education progression. Some of the activities they have delivered include:

- **Mentoring**
- **Skills development workshops and masterclasses**
- **Development of FutureMe zones and spaces**
- **Talks on higher education and careers**

Developing and delivering activities on an individual college level meant that support was tailored and appropriate for the young people it was designed to support. This allowed flexibility within the programme to meet the needs of young people and help them understand higher education in a context that is relatable to them.

Regional Progression Framework

To ensure that the activity delivered by FutureMe forms a sustained and progressive programme that supports young people to learn about higher education, a Regional Progression Framework was developed. This framework supports practitioners in linking interventions to learning outcomes on the following themes:

- Introducing higher education
- Routes to further and higher education
- Attainment and how this supports progression
- Financial support for further and higher level study
- Applying to further and higher education
- Transition to further and higher education

FutureMe across the region

As well as working directly with young people in schools and colleges, FutureMe promoted higher education on a regional level through a dedicated website, marketing campaigns and engagement activities.

This work aimed to create a positive narrative about higher education in the North East and encourage young people and their key influencers to explore higher education as an option when thinking about future education and career paths. The campaigns and activities were impartial and unbiased and were used as an opportunity to promote the benefits of higher education in a broad sense. To extend our reach as far as possible we used buses, outdoor advertising, cinemas, and radio advertisements. We also reached young people through social media and mobile apps, as well as being present at regional music events.

Evaluating the FutureMe programme

To ensure that the work we are doing is effective and useful for young people we are carefully evaluating our activity. Over the last year our theory of change evaluation strategy was implemented across activities in schools and colleges to assess the activity that has been delivered. An academic reference group was also established to join up academic research and practice in widening participation.

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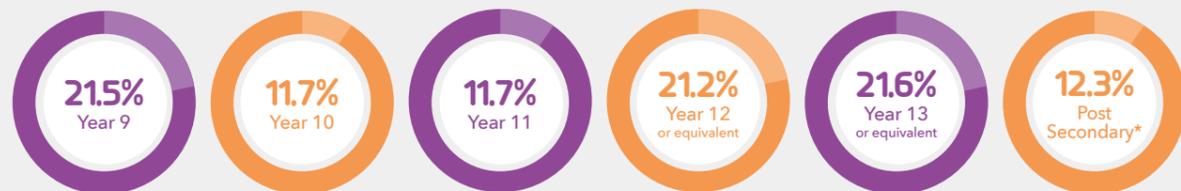
NECOP and FutureMe in numbers

in the 2017-2018 academic year...

8187
target students

engaged in FutureMe activities in **17 colleges** and **76 schools**

FutureMe activities were delivered to young people in Years 9-13 or equivalent:



*Level 2 and 3 learners



FutureMe activities were delivered in all **92** target ward areas



of young people who took part in FutureMe activities reside in a **POLAR3 quintile 1 area**⁴

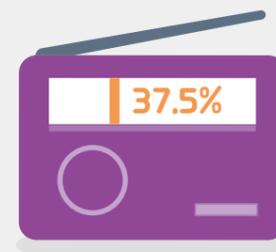
⁴ The POLAR3 classification looks at how likely young people are to participate in higher education and how this varies. Students from quintile 1 are the least likely to participate.

over 1100 activities

took place to support young people to progress to higher education

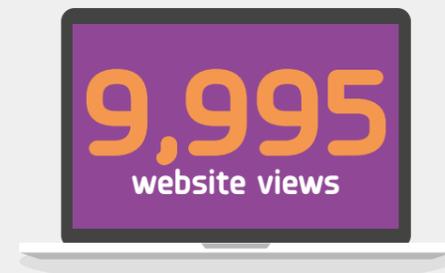


promoting Higher Education across the region



... of parents in the North East were reached through radio messaging

Through social media and marketing campaigns, traffic to the FutureMe website increased by **500%**



...impressions made through Twitter



...impressions made through Snapchat



media impacts were made through on-screen cinema advertising

Activity

Case Studies

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As well as our main programme of activity in schools and colleges, here are some examples of other exciting work we carried out in the 2017-2018 academic year.

Building Resilience

Responding to feedback from teachers that resilience is an area where they would like to see support offered, a bespoke project was developed to meet this need. The topic of resilience was initially introduced as part of a Higher Education Ambassador session delivered in schools on 'Growth Mindset' and based on the response to this additional sessions were created.

A pilot ran in one NECOP school where teachers received a two hour continuing professional development session on Growth Mindset and Resilience techniques. Alongside this a group year 9 boys took part in a series of six 30 minute sessions introducing them to Growth Mindset and basic thought management skills. At the end of the academic year the pilot was expanded to include two additional schools and further development and roll out of this project will continue in the future.

Linking higher education to careers

One of our key aims as a consortium is to develop continuing professional development (CPD) around higher education progression for teachers and advisers. By working with the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and The Edge Foundation we have worked to understand how to empower teachers so that they can better support young learners to consider higher education.

In the 2017-2018 academic year we supported the pilot of the Next Generation Learning model in the North East, providing staff in three NECOP schools with resources to:

- improve teachers' understanding of regional Labour Market Information
- develop models of good practice supporting careers in the curriculum which can be disseminated across the region
- develop the opportunity to get real world experience through externships with businesses and deliver a teacher CPD event to share their learning
- create resources to support the development and delivery of careers in the curriculum.

This work will support teachers and careers advisors with implementing the Gatsby Benchmarks in their school, particularly Gatsby Benchmark 4 ('Linking curriculum learning to careers'), which is one of the most difficult benchmarks for schools to achieve. Outcomes of the pilot will be:

- a careers in the curriculum toolkit with a focus on demonstrating progression to HE
- best practice case studies to share with schools across the region
- an audit tool to support schools and colleges plan careers in the curriculum with a focus on progression to HE
- events to showcase project outcomes and share learning.

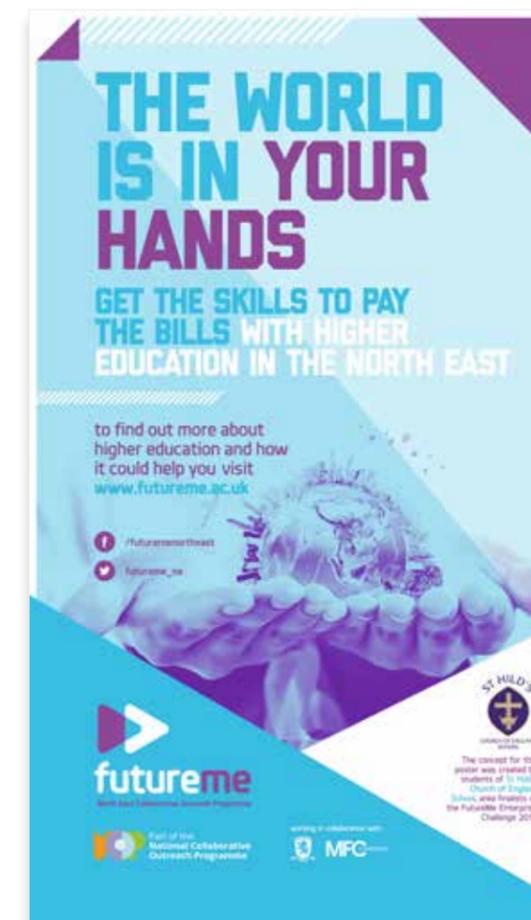
Encouraging boys into HE

Young men are a particular target group for NECOP and reaching them in ways that allow meaningful conversations about higher education can be difficult. However, over the spring and summer terms of 2018 we delivered the FutureMe Enterprise Challenge in collaboration with the region's three main football clubs. This adaptation of the Premier League Enterprise Challenge involved 17 schools and 202 young men in year 9.

The students participated in a series of sessions with their local football club focusing on higher education and skills development. They also worked in small groups to plan a messaging campaign that would encourage young men to consider higher education. In July 2018 three regional finals were held where groups presented their campaigns. The regional winners will have their ideas displayed across the region and the overall winners will produce and record a radio show about their experiences.

▶ "Since doing this project I have understood HE a lot more and I am more convinced now to take HE for a better life in all aspects."

FutureMe Enterprise Challenge participant



This poster idea was created by students from St Hild's Church of England School in Hartlepool as part of the FutureMe Enterprise Challenge.

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What do people think of NECOP and FutureMe?

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Students

What was the most useful element of the FutureMe activities you have taken part in?

"Talking to some of the current students who are currently doing higher education."

"Realising just how important HE would be to my industry and how I could progress doing this... I have learnt about the different levels of study and facts about how important a degree would be in the future."

"FutureMe have given me the tools to be ready for level 4 and even further."

How have FutureMe activities that you have taken part in helped you make decisions about higher education?

"It helped me think about different universities and degrees."

"It helped me make a decision by showing me what I could potentially do. It has opened my mind up to what I could do for a career."

"They have shown me what higher education involves and how it works."

Teachers and Advisers

"FutureMe is a brilliant way to not only educate students about Higher Education, but gives them an idea of how they can achieve their future goals."

For students who have worked on FutureMe activities... "there has been a noticeable improvement in their confidence and ability to speak to adults."

"This is an enriching programme which offers equality and raises the aspirations of students: many of whom have no previous positive interactions with higher education."

"It is fantastic that this project often reaches those students who might sometimes not receive intervention in school and that the end goal is to raise their aspirations."

"Already we can see that the Year 9 mentoring programme has had a long-lasting impact on our participants. The students really valued the 1-2-1 support they received from their student mentor as it became a non-judgemental space for students to discuss any questions they had regarding HE."

How important is the work being carried out by FutureMe in relation to higher education progression?

"I think it is vital."

"I believe the work [FutureMe] is carrying out is extremely important to the students involved in the programme as well as the targeted areas and wider community. It can only have a positive impact to all involved encouraging students to consider higher education as it raises aspiration, self-worth and builds pride in a community where students view themselves as 'smart' and 'worthy' enough to be involved in higher education."

"Massively! I also think it is vital that this support starts as early as possible..."

"Really important in helping to raise aspirations and to encourage students to consider HE as a future pathway."

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Our Partners and Stakeholders

What do you perceive to be the biggest benefit of FutureMe activities being delivered in the North East?

"The biggest benefit is the opportunities and information that are being provided to the students who might not receive it otherwise. From my experience of talking with the students and their tutors many students have false beliefs about Higher Education and about what life after college is like in general. The project provides a platform for them to receive accurate, personalised and timely information which I believe is invaluable."

What impact have FutureMe activities had on the young people that you work with?

"The students that I have worked with enjoy the soft skills training workshops as well as the informational sessions, and even if they decide not to seek higher education, at least they are able to make a more informed decision."

"I feel in our institution having someone solely there to focus on [the students'] progression is refreshing and they can leave their class work in the class whilst developing transferable and personal skills."

Ryan Gibson, National Facilitator: Careers Education, said:

"The North East Collaborative Outreach Programme (NECOP) has been an incredibly positive development for the region and has provided opportunities that have inspired collaboration and partnership working. The NECOP team have created a regional progression framework and encouraged the development of a range of innovative activities and opportunities that schools and colleges have been able to create/develop/access. These resources have supported schools and colleges to enhance their provision and to achieve the Gatsby Benchmarks and therefore provide meaningful encounters, encouraging young people to visualise and access higher education where previously they may not have had the opportunity to do so... NECOP has been a force for good in the region, strategically and operationally supporting and challenging schools and colleges to support their young people and inspire them about progression to (and through) higher education. Social mobility is an economic necessity in our region and the work of NECOP is an essential component of making this a reality in the North East."

NECOP in the Future

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In the 2018-2019 academic year we will work to consolidate and improve the programme already in place, and expand our reach to as many NECOP target students as possible. Funding from the Office for Students has been secured to continue NECOP and the FutureMe programme until July 2019.

A decision on future funding beyond July 2019 will be taken by the Office for Students in December 2018. In the meantime, as well as continuing with the main FutureMe programme, we will also be working on some exciting new projects including:

Higher Education Champions

Following an application process this project will allow a designated staff member in 34 NECOP schools to take on additional responsibility to champion higher education progression in their school. Higher Education Champions will take part in bespoke training and events, and work closely with their local Project Co-ordinator to ensure that supporting higher education progression is prioritised in their school. Through this project we hope to provide additional support for young people as well as upskilling staff who will be able to pass on new knowledge about higher education to both colleagues and students.

Linking to Careers Education

We will be working to ensure the activity delivered through FutureMe and NECOP compliments information and support young people receive in relation to careers, and make sure we are aligned with emerging priorities in this area.



contact us

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North East Collaborative Outreach Programme



Part of the
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Outreach Programme**

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