Understanding and Meeting the Needs of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Learners in West Yorkshire

Research Report

Contents

Introduction

Research Objectives

BACKGROUND AND BRIEF

This research focuses on the educational landscape and opportunities for progression into Higher Education (HE) for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME*) young people.

In line with original programme goals, Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY) wanted to develop an understanding of how the Uni Connect/Hub can better support BAME young people to progress to Higher Education.

GHWY also wanted to gain a greater understanding of the educational opportunities for these young people at school/college in Key Stage 4 and progressing into Further and Higher Education.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Key research objectives include:

1. Review the opportunities and outreach provided by Further and Higher Education providers;
2. Deepen understanding of how GHWY can most effectively support BAME young people through HE outreach activity;
3. Develop understanding of the potential barriers to HE progression for these young people;
4. Develop insights into the role of parents and carers in supporting decision making and educational choices;
5. Develop resources and activity to better support BAME young people on their educational journey;
6. Interrogate the usefulness of 'BAME' as a category and develop more nuanced understanding of young people's varied social and cultural contexts;
7. Share learnings with local school, college and Higher Education partners, as well as contributing to the national evidence-base via other partnerships and the OfS.

KEY QUESTIONS

a. What subjects/courses do these young people study at school/college, and how are these choices offered and made?
b. What are the potential barriers to HE progression for these young people and how might HE institutions address these?
c. When BAME young people do go on to Further and Higher Education, is this at the same rate as their peers, and what factors influence this?
d. How can pre-entry activity support the retention and success of these young people when they do progress to Higher Education?
e. What understanding do BAME young people have of their future educational options and choices?
f. What type of outreach is already happening between Higher Education and schools/colleges and can impacts be determined from this? If so, what learning can be gained here?

*Note: In line with the objectives of this research and the common language used in related literature, this report uses the term BAME as a collective term for people of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. However, this term was not used to describe participants in our research discussions and is not a term that is necessarily used by them. Indeed, the use of this term is itself a question within our evaluation (p34).

Methodology

A combination of quantitative and qualitative, primary and secondary methodologies were used to investigate research objectives, including:

Background Literature Review (page 6)
A review of existing background literature around the BAME Awarding Gap and challenges for BAME learners in education.

Secondary Data Analysis of UCAS (p14), HESA (p17) and CFE (p19) Data
A review and summary of key findings from UCAS' End of Cycle Reports and associated university application data; HESA university enrolment data and CFE student survey data from West Yorkshire.

Primary Research Interviews and Discussions with BAME Learners (p25)
A combination of one-to-one interviews and discussion groups with 37 learners across five ethnicity segments:
- 10 South Asian learners (5 KS4 and 5 FE)
- 9 Black African learners (4 KS4 and 5 FE)
- 7 Black Caribbean learners (4 KS4 and 3 FE)
- 8 Mixed Heritage learners (4 KS4 and 4 FE)
- 3 Polish learners (all FE)

A Learner-Parent Interview, Primary Research Task (p70)
18 learners interviewed 21 parents, using an online survey/script provided by Cosmos, including:
- 7 South Asian parents of South Asian learners
- 2 South Asian parents of Mixed Heritage learners
- 5 Black African parents of Black African learners
- 1 Black African parent of Mixed Heritage learner
- 5 Black Caribbean parents of Black Caribbean learners
- 1 Polish parent of Polish learner

Background & Literature Review

Commentary on the inequalities experienced by children in education according to their ethnicity has existed for at least half a century. In 1971, Grenadian activist, politician and former teacher Bernard Coard published the pointedly titled 'How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Sub-normal in the British School System'[1], serving as a catalyst for conversations about racism in British education. In 1999, the Macpherson report[2] into 'matters arising from' the racist killing of teenager Stephen Lawrence brought discussions of 'institutional racism' into mainstream political discourse, and cast schooling as central to wider societal issues regarding race and racism. In 2005, 'Tell it Like it is: How Our Schools Fail Black Children (Richardson, 2005)[3] reported how much of the mistreatment highlighted by Coard (1971) still persisted. Proponents of Critical Race Theory such as Delgado & Stefancic (2001)[4] argue that that racism is endemic and structural and that racial inequalities arise not because 'race' exists (rather, it is a social construction) but because there are barriers a student will face based on their 'race'.

More recently, Akala (2018)[5] summarised the inequalities experienced by 'Black' pupils in UK school as follows:

- Under- assessed at 5 years old (meaning teachers do not put Black students forward for higher tier assessments like they do white students).
- Dramatically under-assessed at 11 years old
- Significantly less likely to be entered for higher-tier exams when they have the same previous academic attainment
- 2.6 times more likely to be expelled even when control factors are taken into account

Criticism of the education system on the grounds of racial inequality point not only to the treatment of BAME learners, but the content of the curriculum itself, with largely student-led calls to 'decolonise the curriculum' in the public discourse for at least two decades[6]. "School curricula too often fail to reflect the diversity of contemporary society, and the National Curriculum does not mandate for engagement with the colonial legacies – or racist underpinnings – of contemporary Britain (Runnymead, race equality thinktank, 2020)[7]."

The disparities for BAME people in education do not end with the learners themselves. A 2020 report by UCL Institute of Education[8] on the employment and retention of BAME teachers in England found that almost half of English schools have no BAME teachers and over a quarter have no BAME staff at all. Just 14% of all teaching staff in England come from BAME backgrounds, with most of these concentrated in London and ethnically diverse schools. This means that many BAME learners, particularly in less diverse locations, may go through school without seeing a teacher of a similar ethnic background. The report states that overt and covert racism are factors in lower retention rates among BAME teachers. "BAME teachers had the same high levels of workload as all teachers, plus an additional 'hidden workload' of coping with racism". In this context it is little wonder that BAME learners may feel underrepresented or discriminated in schools, when BAME teachers experience similar challenges and are so few in number. The lack of BAME staff was also commented upon by learners in our primary research (p46).

The BAME Awarding Gap*

"Of all the disparities that exist within higher education, the BAME attainment gap is among the most stark." *NUS, 'Closing the Gap' (2019)[9]*

The BAME Awarding Gap refers to the gap in higher education providers (HEPs) awarding "good" degree (2:1 or higher) to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students compared to their White peers. Historical research, by the then DfES (Department for Education and Skills), into degree outcomes by ethnic group, collated studies that highlighted that the disparity had existed since at least 1998/99[10] . The absence of any earlier data does not suggest that these disadvantages didn't exist prior to then, but that it has only, in the past few decades, emerged as an area of investigation.

Studies since then, including by the NUS (2011), have started to investigate this underrepresentation and called for an area of policy – the BAME Awarding Gap – to be defined and addressed[11]. The literature, which includes a body of study by organisations such as the Equality Challenge Unit (EQU) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA)[12] as well as the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)[13], have confirmed the findings of the DfES and highlighted that, not only is there an Awarding Gap between White and non-White students, but there are also variations between these non-White groups. This provides a picture of awarding outcomes for each individual ethnic group nationally and allows HEPs to understand which ethnic groups are most underrepresented in awarding outcomes in their institutions. The BAME Awarding Gap exists even after controlling for other variables such as prior attainment and socioeconomic background, suggesting that the lower awarding outcomes of BAME students is specifically related to their ethnicity rather than any other personal or demographic factors.

*Note: The BAME Awarding Gap was previously referred to as the BAME Attainment Gap. Terminology has since changed to emphasise the systemic factors behind the Awarding Gap, moving away from connotations that attainment may be lower due to a deficit among BAME people.

In 2019, the NUS released a report on the practices implemented to widen participation over recent years by institutions and policy makers, with the aim of 'Closing the Attainment Gap'. The report found that BAME students were 13% less likely than their White peers to achieve a good degree. This gap was as high as 17% for Black students. What is clear from the literature is that the Awarding Gap varies by institution, but there are consistent trends. This is because "the BAME Attainment Gap does not exist in isolation within Higher Education but is part of the wider structural nature of racial inequality in the UK" [14] . A governmental race disparity audit found that there were "racial injustices in all areas of public life: health, education, employment, housing and the criminal justice system"[15].

Reflecting on the efforts made by universities, FE institutions, government bodies – including HEFCE and the Office for Students – and outreach organisations, the NUS identified five steps needed for success: strong leadership; conversations about race and culture; racially diverse and inclusive environments; data collation and analysis; and an understanding of good practice. Recent evaluation of these efforts show some positive trends, whilst also highlighting the prevalence of existing issues.

According to the UCAS End of 2020 Cycle report, the overall entry rate for Black students entering HE at aged 18 reached 47.5%, 53.1% for Asian students, 39% for students of Mixed Heritage and 46.6% for any other non-White ethnic group, compared to 32.6% for White students[16]. "Entry to higher tariff providers, where historically entry has been low, also reached a record level, with 10.2% of Black students entering this group of providers. However, the Black ethnic group remains the least likely to enter higher tariff providers – 3.94 times less likely than those from the Chinese ethnic group". A positive trend here is that the number of Black students attending higher tariff institutions is increasing, but the reflection of the Awarding Gap continues in that is still lower than White students.

Critically, admission into HE does not equate to awarding outcomes. As expressed above, the causes of the Awarding Gap are not restricted to practices within HEPs, or lack thereof. This is highlighted in the fact that assessment in schools is consistently lower for Black Caribbean pupils compared to White British pupils, while attainment for a number of other BAME groups is often higher than for White British pupils[15]. BAME learners are also over-represented as a proportion of the population in Further Education; with 23% of FE students from BAME backgrounds v 16% of the overall population in 2019[17]. The Awarding Gap in HE is not simply a reflection of academic ability; it is therefore important to explore and understand other non-academic challenges for young BAME students in entering HE, including attitudinal and experiential factors, that can provide useful insight on the nature of the Awarding Gap.

The NUS 2019 report, 'Closing the Gap' described a number of contributory factors in the Awarding Gap, including:

- Institutional Culture
- Ethnic Diversity among role models and staff
- Inclusive curriculum content, design and delivery
- Sense of Belonging
- Information Advice and Guidance
- Financial Considerations
- Preparedness for HE

While the NUS report focused on the factors above within the HE setting in relation to the Awarding Gap in degree outcomes, all of these factors also emerged as relevant challenges for BAME learners at KS4 and FE level, in the primary research element of the current investigation. The final factor listed above, 'preparedness for HE' is a key objective for Go Higher West Yorkshire as part of the Uni Connect programme and was also a central theme in our discussions with learners.

Uni Connect

In January 2017 the Office for Students launched the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), to support the government's social mobility goals by rapidly increasing the number of young people from underrepresented groups entering Higher Education. Partnerships focused their work on local areas where Higher Education participation is lower than might be expected given the GCSE results of the young people who live there. In August 2019, the programme entered its second phase, now under the name Uni Connect, with aims of:

- reducing the gap in Higher Education participation between the most and least represented groups
- supporting young people to make well-informed decisions about their future education
- supporting effective and impactful local collaboration by Higher Education providers working together with schools, colleges, employers and other partners
- contributing to a stronger evidence base around 'what works' in Higher Education outreach and strengthening evaluation practice in the sector.
- targeting Higher Education outreach within the local areas where we can have the most impact
- outreach hubs within the 29 local partnerships with cross-England coverage to help schools and colleges access the Higher Education outreach they need and provide a platform for wider collaboration.

Go Higher West Yorkshire delivers Uni Connect in the West Yorkshire area. Go Higher West Yorkshire is a partnership of HE providers in West Yorkshire, working together to reduce inequalities in HE access, success and progression. The core aim of the partnership is to connect its member institutions in support of this goal.

It is in the backdrop of the objectives of Uni Connect and Go Higher West Yorkshire, and acknowledgement of the particular challenges experienced by BAME learners in education, as evidenced by the BAME Awarding Gap, that the need for the current research emerges. In order to reduce the Awarding Gap and help BAME learners to achieve the best possible outcomes, institutions need to understand the experiences and challenges of BAME learners before they enter HE. Such insights could be used to inform the support provided to young BAME learners to improve their 'preparedness for HE' as well as by HEPs if and when these students arrive at their institutions.

COVID-19 and Events of 2020

Compounding the challenges for underrepresented learners generally, and BAME learners specifically, education in the UK experienced unprecedented disruption over the course of 2020 in relation to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic and subsequent school closures. In addition, the challenges of BAME people across society, and conversations around topics such as institutional racism, have increased in focus following the activity and publicity surrounding the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. For Widening Participation organisations, HEPs, and government bodies to effectively deliver policies and practices that challenge the BAME Awarding Gap and other challenges for young BAME people, it is necessary to understand the ways in which the pandemic and the BLM movement has, or might, shape attitudes and experiences towards education and universities for young BAME learners and aspiring undergraduates.

Critically, the Higher Education sector has been heavily impacted by both events. The pandemic has led to rent strikes from students during lockdown[18], while there are increasingly mounting challenges to university curricula and legacies in the wake of 2020 BLM activity. More than 300 academics and students have criticised universities for their "tokenistic and superficial" support for the Black Lives Matter movement given their poor record on tackling institutional racism[19]. Whilst many HE providers are undertaking a lot of work to address this, as many of these debates play out in the media, young people are likely to be aware of the arguments and their attitudes to HEPs may be affected. Furthermore, existing disparities in education are also likely to be exacerbated by the pandemic. Given that BAME people are disproportionately affected by the pandemic[20], it is necessary to understand any anxieties that aspiring BAME undergraduates may have developed, or been exacerbated, as a result. This topic is discussed in our primary research with BAME learners (p66).

Sources:

1. Coard, B. (1971) How the West Indian Child is Made Educationally Sub-Normal in the British School System. London: Commission for Racial Equality.
2. Macpherson, W (1999) The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. Report of an inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny.
3. Richardson, B (2005) Tell it Like it is: How Our Schools Fail Black Children, Bookmarks
4. Delgado, R & Stefancic, J (2001), Critical Race Theory, An Introduction. New York University Press. New York and London
5. Akala (2018). Natives. Two Roads: London.
6. Charles, Elizabeth. 2019. "Decolonizing the Curriculum". Insights 32 (1): 24. DOI
7. Joseph-Salisbury, R (2020), Race and Racism in English Secondary Schools, Runnymead.
8. Tereshchenko, A., Mills, M., and Bradbury, A. (2020). Making progress? Employment and retention of BAME teachers in England. London: UCL Institute of Education.
9. National Union of Students, 2019. Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK universities: #Closingthegap
10. Broecke, S. and Nicholls, T., 2006. Ethnicity and degree attainment. Research Report RW92; Department for Education and Skills.
11. National Union of Students, 2011. Race for equality: a report on the experiences of Black students in further and Higher Education.
12. Equality Challenge Unit and Higher Education Academy, 2008. Ethnicity, gender and degree attainment.
13. Higher Education Funding Council For England, (2010) Student ethnicity profile and progression of entrants to fulltime, first degree study
14. Office For Students, 2018. Topic briefing: Black and minority ethnic (BAME) students [online]. At www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/145556db-8183- 40b8-b7af-741bf2b55d79/topic-briefing_BAME- students.pdf
15. Cabinet Office (2017) Race Disparity Audit Summary Findings from the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website. London: Cabinet Office.
16. UCAS, 2021. What Happened to The Covid Cohort? Lessons for levelling up in 2021 and beyond. End of Cycle Report 2020.
17. https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/a-levels-apprenticeships-further-education/further-education-participation/latest#by-ethnicity-over-time
18. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-55576471
19. https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jul/06/universities-criticised-for-tokenistic-support-for-black-lives-matter
20. Campion, K., 2020. Universities must not forget about BAME students during this crisis.

Secondary Data Analysis

Secondary Data Analysis
General Demographic Data

Before exploring the experiences and challenges of BAME learners in West Yorkshire in detail, it is worth understanding the size and composition of this population in the UK generally and West Yorkshire more specifically.

According to the 2011 Census, the total population of England and Wales was 56.1 million, with 86% of the population being White. People from Asian ethnic groups made up the second largest percentage of the population (at 7.5%), followed by Black ethnic groups (at 3.3%), Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups (at 2.2%) and Other ethnic groups (at 1.0%). 4.2 million people (7.5%) were from Asian ethnic groups, with 1.4 million of those identifying with the Indian ethnic group (2.5%), and 1.1 million with the Pakistani ethnic group (2.0%) 1.9 million people (3.3%) were from Black ethnic groups, with just under 1 million of those identifying with the Black African ethnic group (1.8%), and 0.6 million within the Black Caribbean ethnic group (1.1%)

Yorkshire and The Humber is moderately ethnically diverse relative to other UK regions, with 86% White British (London most diverse with 45% and North East least diverse with 94%). Yorkshire and The Humber is home to over 20% of the UK's Pakistani ethnic population.

Areas of England and Wales by ethnicity
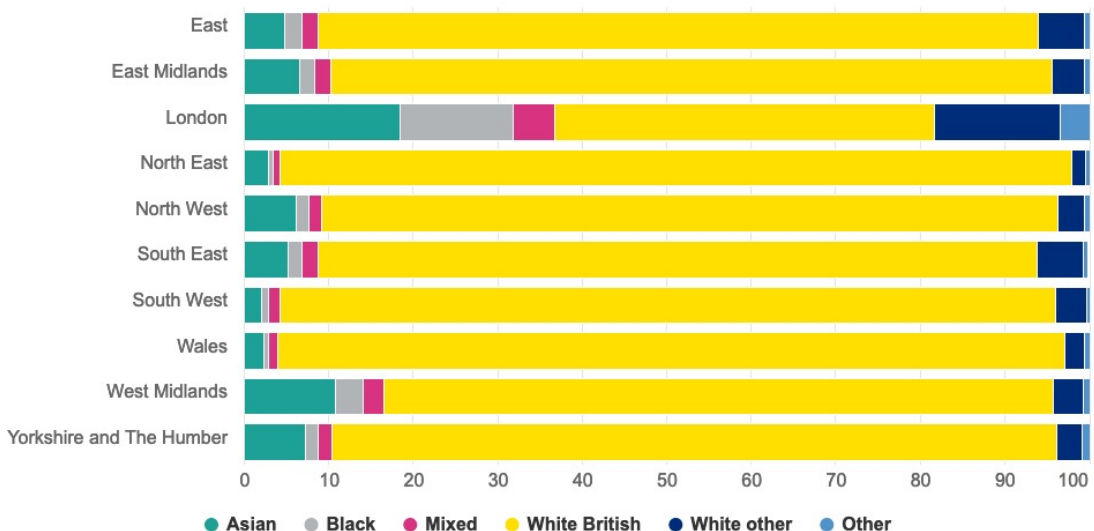
Source: England & Wales 2011 Census; https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/regional-ethnic-diversity/latest

Secondary Data Analysis
UCAS Application Data

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Services (UCAS) is the body that operates the application process for UK universities. Each year, UCAS collects and shares data and insights around the volume of HE applications and acceptances via different routes in the form of an End of Cycle Report and supplementary data. The End of 2020 Application Cycle was reported via two main insight reports; 'What happened to the COVID cohort?' (December 2020) and 'Where next? What influences the choices school leavers make?' (March 2021), as well as a number of data reports split by various demographics.

'What happened to the COVID cohort?', as its name suggests, focuses on the impacts of COVID-19 on HE applications. It describes how "the impact of COVID on students, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, was one of the biggest concerns the education sector faced this year, with many fearing that the progress seen over the past decade would be reversed". However, despite these fears and the challenges surrounding COVID-19, it was found that "more students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds across the UK entered HE in 2020 than ever before. This was reflected even in the most selective universities and courses." UCAS suggest a number of factors behind this trend including; prospective student perceptions of Higher Education as a 'stable option' during a turbulent time for the labour market, an increased number of students meeting entry requirements based on 'centre assessment grades' than on their original exam results and government-increased capacity across HE.

Despite indications of progress in 2020 (overall entry rate rose to a record 37%; record numbers of acceptances from the lowest participation areas, increased acceptances for underrepresented students at higher tariff universities), UCAS suggest that the upcoming class of 2021 may be more severely impacted by gaps in their education and progression support over the past year and will need to play 'catch up'. Coupled with a rising 18 year old population (around 90,000 additional applicants are expected by 2025), without growth in HE places, it is expected that competition will increase, with those from underrepresented backgrounds being more likely to miss out in years to come.

The report also highlights an increase in the number of universities declaring mental health issues. It is unclear whether this increase is due to the impacts of COVID-19 itself or a product of the increased acceptances of students from underrepresented backgrounds, as described above, but with the continuing mental health challenges associated with the ongoing COVID-19 situation, this should remain an area of focus. The challenges of COVID-19 as experienced by BAME learners in particular are discussed within our primary research, on page 66.

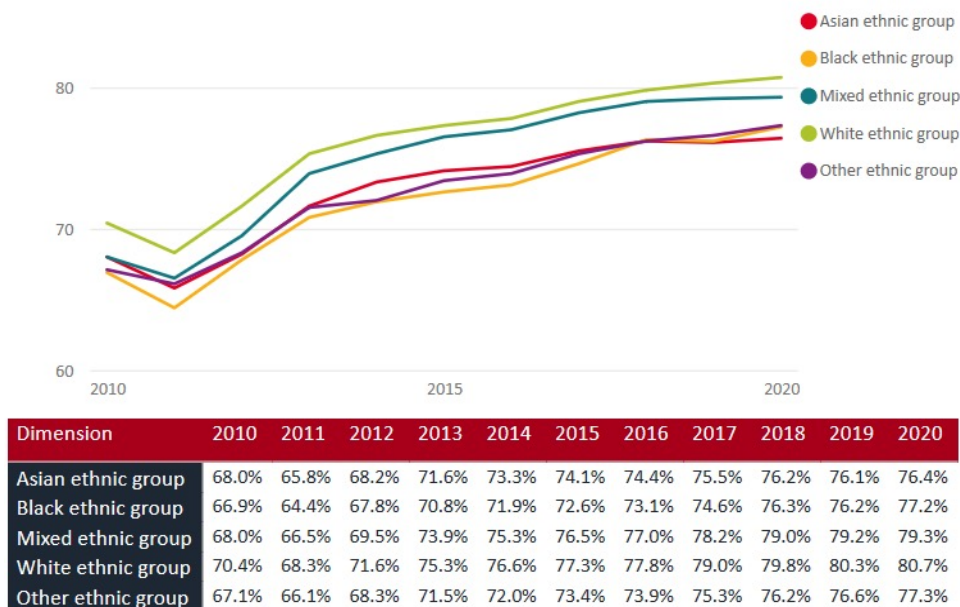Source: *'What happened to the COVID cohort?'* UCAS, 2020

'Where next? What influences the choices school leavers make?' (March 2021) explores student choice and motivation across the student journey. Some key insights from this report are listed below, many of which echo with the findings of Cosmos' primary research with BAME learners and support the importance of Widening Participation activity by Go Higher West Yorkshire and the Uni Connect programme:

- Underrepresented students are more likely to consider HE later than other students, which can limit their choices, especially for more selective subjects and higher tariff providers. This suggests that careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) should be embedded earlier in education
- 83% of students decided on their degree subject before their university, highlighting the important role of subject-specific outreach. *BAME learners in Cosmos' primary research expressed the importance of varied and tailored subject-specific outreach and support (p65)*
- Decisions are most influenced by enjoyment, but employability is increasingly important post-COVID: Over 50% of students report that high graduate employment rates have become more important to them since the start of the pandemic
- One in five students report they could not study an HE subject that interested them because they did not have the relevant subjects for entry – with medicine the most commonly cited. Students should be made aware of how choices made in school can affect later options. *This may be of particular relevance to South Asian learners who are especially inclined toward Medicine (p18) as well as other professional subject and career areas (p53)*
- Parents and carers play an important role in supporting a young person's decision-making, and one in four students cite parents or carers as their 'biggest help' when determining their choice of degree course. However, only 6% say they chose their degree subject because their parents or carers wanted them to, with this more likely to be a factor for medicine students (10%)
- Two in five students believe more information and advice would have led to them making better choices, and almost one in three students report not receiving any information about apprenticeships from their school. This again highlights a need for earlier, broader, and personalised careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG)
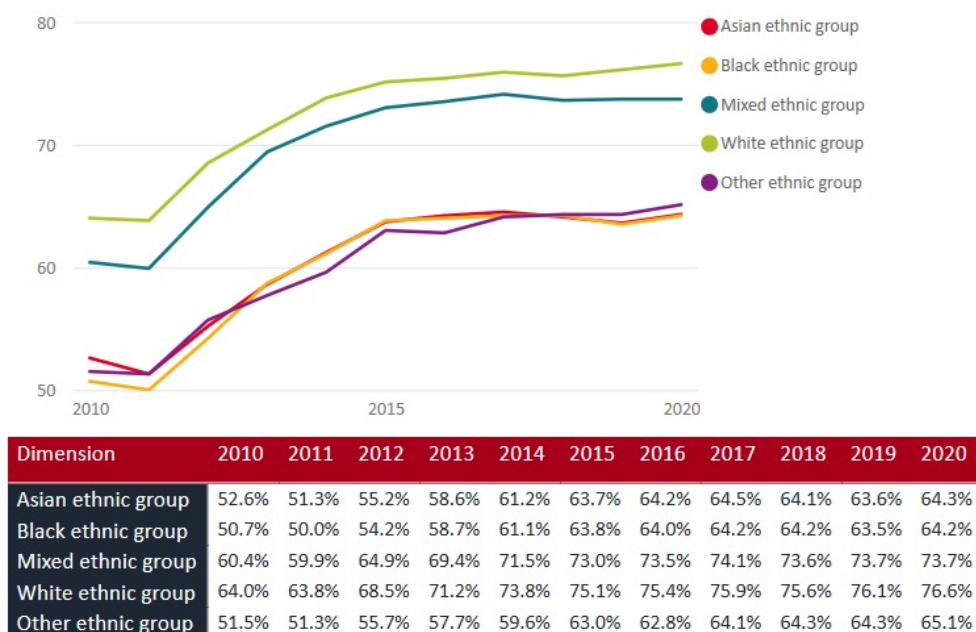
Source: *Where next? What influences the choices school leavers make?* UCAS, 2021

In addition to the insights reported on the previous pages, UCAS also provides a range of supplementary data split by various demographics. From this data we can see that offer rates for BAME applicants have increased steadily for most of the past decade, but are still a few percent behind those of White applicants. However, this difference is much more apparent at higher tariff providers, where the offer rate for Black, Asian and Other ethnic students trails that of White students by more than 10%.

Average offer rate for 18 year olds in All UK providers by Ethnic Group

Dimension	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asian ethnic group	68.0%	65.8%	68.2%	71.6%	73.3%	74.1%	74.4%	75.5%	76.2%	76.1%	76.4%
Black ethnic group	66.9%	64.4%	67.8%	70.8%	71.9%	72.6%	73.1%	74.6%	76.3%	76.2%	77.2%
Mixed ethnic group	68.0%	66.5%	69.5%	73.9%	75.3%	76.5%	77.0%	78.2%	79.0%	79.2%	79.3%
White ethnic group	70.4%	68.3%	71.6%	75.3%	76.6%	77.3%	77.8%	79.0%	79.8%	80.3%	80.7%
Other ethnic group	67.1%	66.1%	68.3%	71.5%	72.0%	73.4%	73.9%	75.3%	76.2%	76.6%	77.3%

Average offer rate for 18 year olds in Higher Tariff providers by Ethnic Group

Dimension	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asian ethnic group	52.6%	51.3%	55.2%	58.6%	61.2%	63.7%	64.2%	64.5%	64.1%	63.6%	64.3%
Black ethnic group	50.7%	50.0%	54.2%	58.7%	61.1%	63.8%	64.0%	64.2%	64.2%	63.5%	64.2%
Mixed ethnic group	60.4%	59.9%	64.9%	69.4%	71.5%	73.0%	73.5%	74.1%	73.6%	73.7%	73.7%
White ethnic group	64.0%	63.8%	68.5%	71.2%	73.8%	75.1%	75.4%	75.9%	75.6%	76.1%	76.6%
Other ethnic group	51.5%	51.3%	55.7%	57.7%	59.6%	63.0%	62.8%	64.1%	64.3%	64.3%	65.1%

Source: https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-data-resources-2020/2020-entry-ucas-undergraduate-reports-sex-area-background-and-ethnic-group

HESA Student Data

HESA, the Higher Education Statistics Agency, collect and disseminate annual statistics about the enrolment of students in Higher Education Institutions across the UK. Data up to academic year 2020/21 show that total student enrolment in HE (including Undergraduate and Postgraduate study specifically and combined) has increased steadily over the last twenty years, with the exception of a dip between 2011/12 and 2013/14 following the rise in tuition fees to £9000 per year.

The total proportion of BAME learners enrolling in undergraduate study in the UK has increased by 3% in the last five years, from 13% in 2015/16 to 16% in 2019/20. This is driven specifically by an increased proportion of Asian learners, from 10% to 12%, and 'Other' (ethnicity) learners, from 1% to 2%. The proportion of Black and Mixed Heritage learners enrolling at undergraduate level has remained stable in this period, at 8% and 4% respectively. *See appendix page 90 for supporting data.*

Source: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he

HEPs in Yorkshire and The Humber have a slightly lower proportion of BAME learners (23%) vs the UK Total (27%); however this latter total is largely driven by the higher proportion (52%) of BAME learners at HEPs in London. Of the other regions in England, only West Midlands, East Midlands and East of England have a larger proportion of BAME learners than West Yorkshire.

HEPs in Yorkshire and The Humber have a higher than average proportion of Asian learners (12% v 11%), with the University of Bradford (54%) being the University with the highest proportion of Asian learners in the UK. The University of Huddersfield (24%) and Leeds Trinity University (22%) are also among the top 15% of HEPs in the UK in terms of their proportion of Asian learners. *See appendix page 91 for supporting data.*

Source: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/where-study/characteristics

Asian and Other Ethnicity learners are more likely than White learners to enrol in science subjects[1], with Black and Mixed Heritage learners slightly less likely. *See appendix page 91 for supporting data.*

Specific science subjects that Asian learners are more likely to study (as a proportion of learners of their ethnicity) than White learners include Medicine (5.2% of all Asian learners v 1.8% of White learners); Pharmacy (3.4% v 0.5%) and Biomedical Sciences (2.9% v 0.8%). Among non-Science subjects, Asian learners are also more likely than White learners to study Law (7.3% v 4.2%), Accounting (3.3% v 0.9%) and Economics (3.3% v 1.3%). The most popular subjects among Asian learners overall are Law (7.3%), Medicine (5.2%) and Business Studies (4.8%).

Black learners are less likely than White learners to study the majority of science subjects, with the notable exceptions of Adult Nursing (5.5% of all Black learners v 2.3% of White learners) and Mental Health Nursing (2.9% v 0.6%). Among non-Science subjects, Black learners are also more likely than White learners to study Health Studies (4.2% v 2.2%), Business Studies (5.5% v 3.0%), Law (5.9% v 4.2%) and Social Work (3.0% v 1.3%). The most popular subjects among Black learners overall are Law (5.9%), Adult Nursing (5.5%) and Business Studies (5.5%)

Mixed Heritage learners are less likely than White learners to study the majority of science subjects, with the notable exceptions of Medicine (2.8% of all Mixed Heritage learners v 1.8% of White learners), Biomedical Sciences (1.3% v 0.8%), Psychology (4.9% v 4.5%) and Architecture (1.2% v 0.8%). Among non-Science subjects, Mixed Heritage learners are also more likely than White learners to study Economics (2.2.% v 1.3%), Design Studies (3.5% v 2.7%) and Sociology (3.1% v 2.5%). The most popular subjects among Mixed Heritage learners overall are Law (5.6%), Psychology (4.9%) and Design Studies (3.5%).

See appendix pages 92-93 for a full breakdown of subjects by ethnicity.

Secondary Data Analysis

CFE Student Survey Data

During Phase 1 of the Uni Connect Programme, CFE Research worked in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University, the Behavioural Insights Team and economists from the University of Sheffield and LSE to undertake a formative and impact evaluation of the Uni Connect programme[1]. The Phase 1 report for the Office for Students was published in October 2019. CFE is continuing with the impact evaluation in Phase 2 which runs until autumn 2021.

A central methodology within the CFE evaluation of Uni Connect is a survey administered the pupils from Years 9 to 13 across the UK, facilitated by Uni Connect hubs/partnerships across each region.

The survey focuses on four key themes in measuring pupils' propensity toward Higher Education:

- Knowledge of HE
- Attitudes towards HE
- Aspirations
- Intention toward HE (likelihood of application)

A number of specific questions relate to each of these themes, which are covered in the subsequent pages.

As well as feeding into the national evaluation of Uni Connect, CFE provide access to regional partnerships like Go Higher West Yorkshire to analyse survey data from their region as they see fit. As part of the current research, GHWY asked Cosmos to analyse CFE survey data from the West Yorkshire region with a particular view to comparing knowledge, attitudes, aspirations and intentions towards HE by ethnicity. The following pages show the findings from this analysis, based on 614 surveys from CFE Wave 2 across West Yorkshire, including 101 BAME learners. We have also separated 46 South Asian learners from 65 Other BAME learners (including Black and Mixed Heritage learners); however sample sizes for other specific ethnicities were insufficient. The 'Total BAME' data refers to South Asian and all Other BAME learners.

Source:
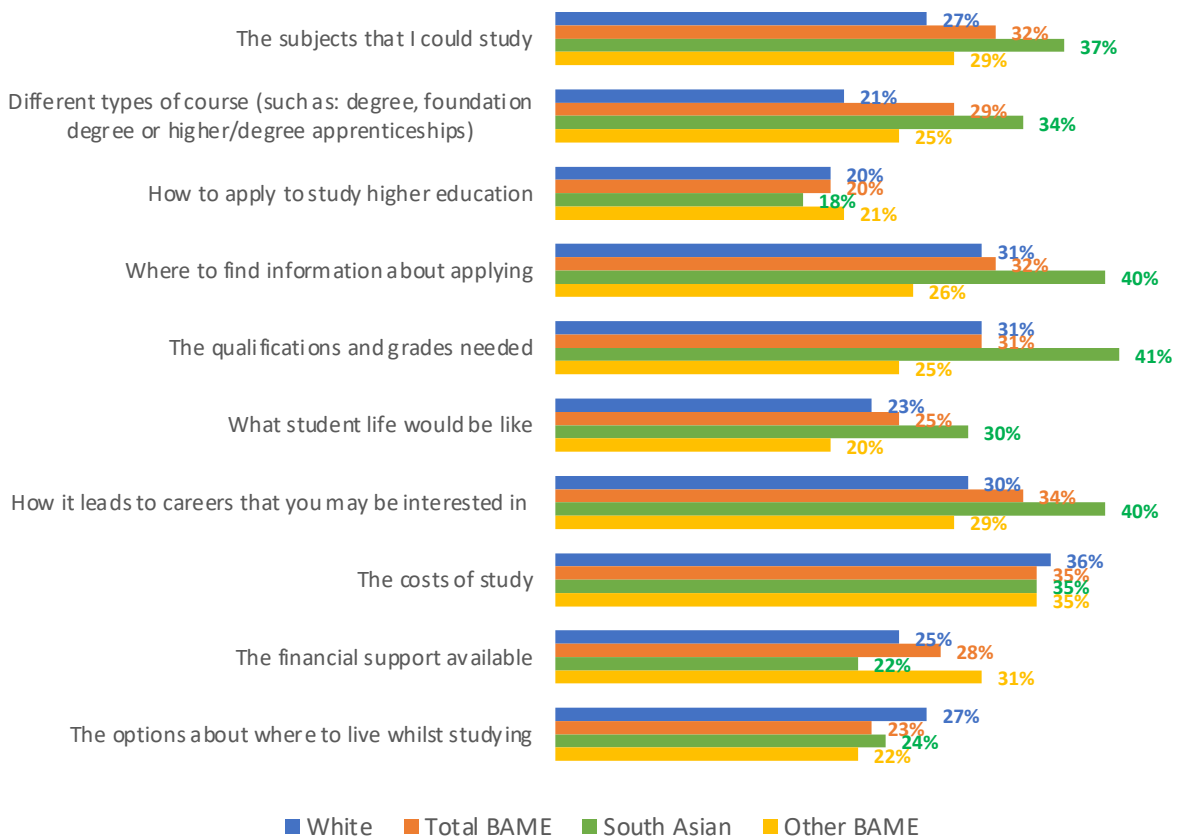1.   cfe.org.uk/work/national-evaluation-of-uni-connect/

Knowledge of Higher Education

BAME (Total BAME) learners expressed greater levels of knowledge than White learners across all but four knowledge statements, with equal scores on 'how to apply' and 'the qualifications and grades needed'; and lower scores on 'the costs of study' and 'the options about where to live whilst studying'.

South Asian learners in particular expressed greater levels of knowledge than Other BAME learners and White learners on the majority of knowledge statements, scoring lower than both segments on just two statements; 'how to apply' and 'the financial support available'. South Asian learners also scored lower than White learners, but higher than Other BAME learners, on 'the options about where to live while studying'.

CFE Knowledge Statements compared across Ethnicities

How much do you know about the following aspects of applying to higher education? % "A lot"

Knowledge Statement	White	Total BAME	South Asian	Other BAME
The subjects that I could study	27%	32%	37%	29%
Different types of course (such as: degree, foundation degree or higher/degree apprenticeships)	21%	29%	34%	25%
How to apply to study higher education	20%	20%	18%	21%
Where to find information about applying	31%	32%	40%	26%
The qualifications and grades needed	31%	31%	41%	25%
What student life would be like	23%	25%	30%	20%
How it leads to careers that you may be interested in	30%	34%	40%	29%
The costs of study	36%	35%	35%	35%
The financial support available	25%	28%	22%	31%
The options about where to live whilst studying	27%	23%	24%	22%

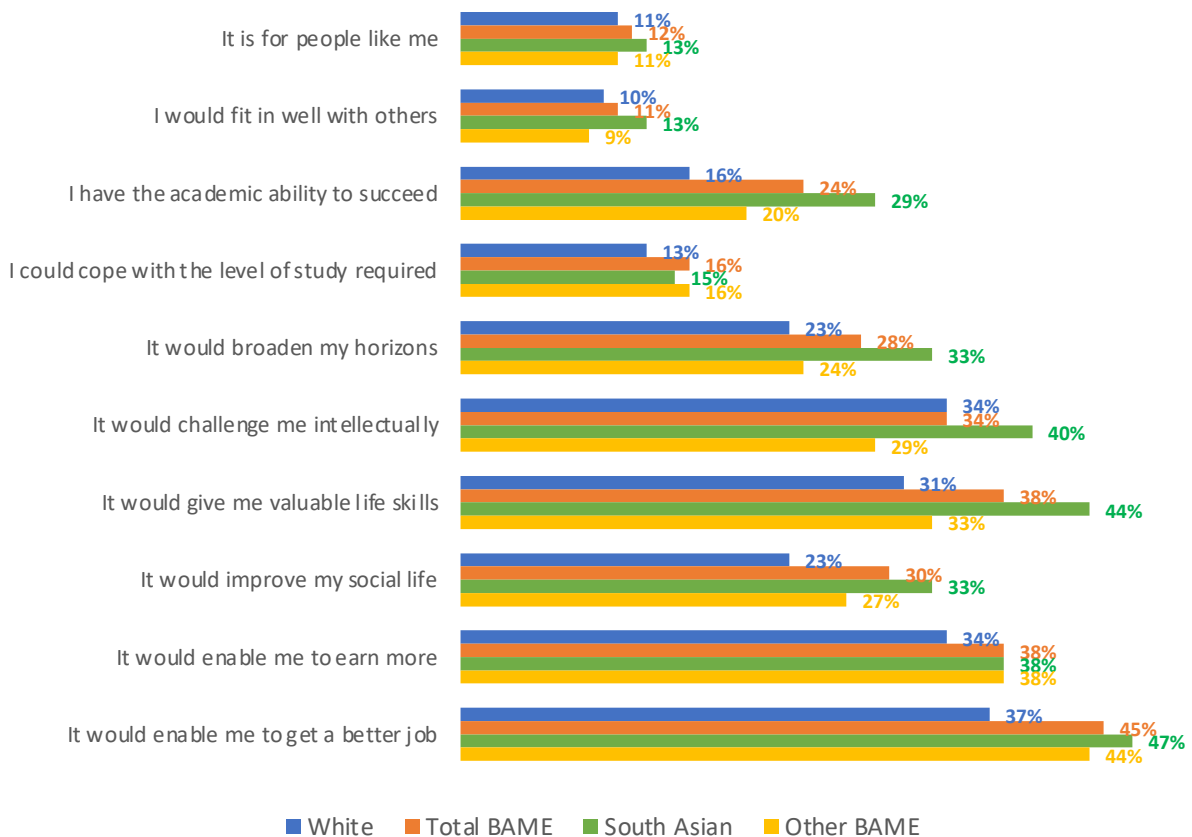Legend: White, Total BAME, South Asian, Other BAME

Attitudes towards Higher Education

BAME (Total BAME) learners expressed more favourable attitudes toward higher education than White learners across all attitude statements except one where they score equally; 'it would challenge me intellectually'.

South Asian learners in particular expressed more favourable attitudes toward higher education than White learners across all attitude statements and score higher than Other BAME learners across all except 'I could cope with the level of study required', where they score lower, and 'It would enable me to earn more', where they score equally.

CFE Attitude Statements compared across Ethnicities

How much do you agree with the following statements about higher education? % "Strongly Agree"

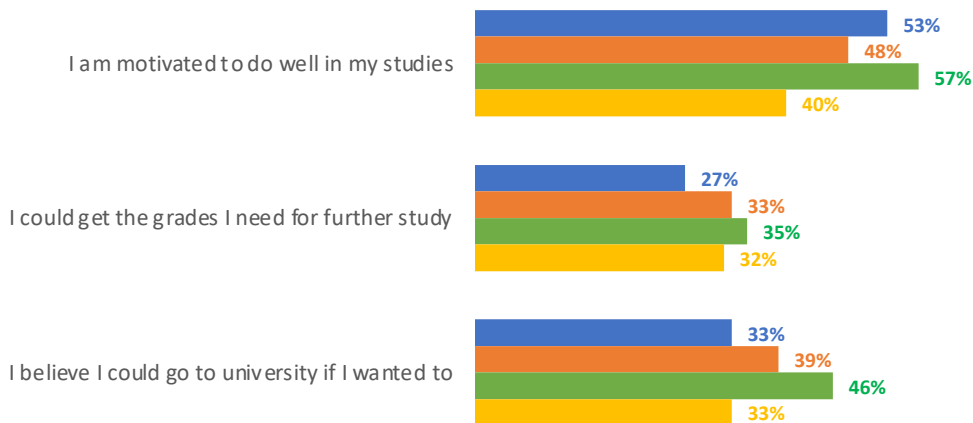| Statement	White	Total BAME	South Asian	Other BAME
It is for people like me	11%	12%	13%	11%
I would fit in well with others	10%	11%	13%	9%
I have the academic ability to succeed	16%	24%	29%	20%
I could cope with the level of study required	13%	16%	15%	16%
It would broaden my horizons	23%	28%	33%	24%
It would challenge me intellectually	34%	34%	40%	29%
It would give me valuable life skills	31%	38%	44%	33%
It would improve my social life	23%	30%	33%	27%
It would enable me to earn more	34%	38%	38%	38%
It would enable me to get a better job	37%	45%	47%	44%

Aspirations & Intentions

BAME (Total BAME) learners scored higher than White learners on two out of three aspiration statements – 'I could get the grades I need for further study' and 'I believe I could go to university if I wanted to' – but scored lower than White learners on 'I am motivated to well in my studies'. South Asian learners scored higher than Other BAME learners and White Learners on all three aspirations statements.
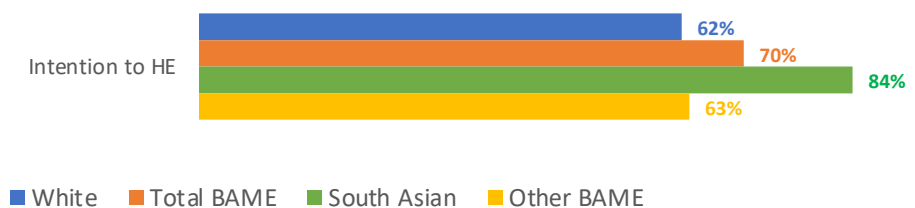
South Asian learners expressed the greatest likelihood to apply to higher education of any segment, with Other BAME learners and Total BAME also being more likely to apply to higher education than White learners.

CFE Aspiration & Intention Statements compared across Ethnicities

How much do you agree with the following statements about your aspiration for the future? % "Strongly Agree"

I am motivated to do well in my studies
- White: 53%
- Total BAME: 48%
- South Asian: 57%
- Other BAME: 40%

I could get the grades I need for further study
- White: 27%
- Total BAME: 33%
- South Asian: 35%
- Other BAME: 32%

I believe I could go to university if I wanted to
- White: 33%
- Total BAME: 39%
- South Asian: 46%
- Other BAME: 33%

How likely are you to apply to higher education at age 18 or 19? % "Fairly likely, Very likely or Definitely Will"

Intention to HE
- White: 62%
- Total BAME: 70%
- South Asian: 84%
- Other BAME: 63%

■ White ■ Total BAME ■ South Asian ■ Other BAME

Key Findings from CFE Student Surveys (West Yorkshire)

- BAME (Total BAME) learners scored higher than White learners across the majority of all CFE Knowledge, Attitudes, Aspiration and Intention questions.
- The only areas in which BAME (Total BAME) learners scored lower than White learners were; knowledge of 'the costs of study' and 'the options about where to live whilst studying' and the aspiration statement 'I am motivated to well in my studies'
- South Asian learners in particular scored higher than Other BAME learners and White learners on the majority of CFE metrics and were the most likely segment to apply to higher education
- The only areas in which South Asian learners scored lower than both White and Other BAME segments were knowledge of 'how to apply' and 'the financial support available'. South Asian learners also scored lower than White learners, but higher than other BAME learners, on knowledge of 'the options about where to live while studying'.
- Given their relative performance across these metrics, the CFE data would not suggest that the BAME Awarding Gap at HE is due to any lack of knowledge, aspiration or positive attitude toward HE, as BAME learners in KS4 and FE scored higher than White learners in all of these areas. This would suggest that other factors, once BAME learners reach Higher Education, are needed to explain the Awarding Gap
- Of the areas in which BAME learners scored lower than White learners, two of these seem to correlate with our primary qualitative research findings (p26); BAME learners – particularly South Asian learners - expressing some concerns about 'the cost of study' or 'financial support' and often being less inclined to live away from home ('the options about where to live while studying'). These may be areas in which BAME learners require more support than White learners
- One CFE statement that stands out as lower for BAME learners (Total BAME and Other BAME only; not South Asian learners) than White learners, is the aspiration statement 'I am motivated to well in my studies'. BAME learners in our primary qualitative research (p25) were generally highly motivated to do well in their studies. However, writers including Kingdon and Cassen (2010)[1] and Wilson et al (2011)[2] have suggested that experiential factors may limit a sense of 'motivation' for BAME learners in schools, such as a difficulties with belonging/bullying and a lack of positive representation in the curriculum, which were themes that also emerged in our primary research. A reason this motivation may not necessarily result in lower results might be due to parental factors and how this may lead young learners to increased study during exam periods or outside of school.

Sources:
1. Kingdon, G., & Cassen, R. (2010). Ethnicity and low achievement in English schools. British Educational Research Journal, 36(3), 403-431.
2. Wilson, D., Burgess, S., & Briggs, A. (2011). The dynamics of school attainment of England's ethnic minorities. Journal of Population Economics, 24(2), 681-700

Primary Research

Learner Interviews & Discussion Groups

The primary research element of the current investigation consisted primarily of online discussion groups or one-to-one interviews with BAME learners. Discussion groups – involving a maximum of five learners per group– were our favoured methodology; enabling us to gather feedback from a number of learners at one time, benefit from the flow of ideas that occurs in the group context and to gain a sense of any commonalities or differences among individuals within a segment. However, one-to-one interviews were also used for learners who were unable to attend their scheduled group discussion or were recruited at a later stage, or where initial recruitment for or completion of discussion groups had been below-target for a particular segment. In total, for the first phase of our primary research, **30 learners took part in an online discussion group, while 7 completed a one-to-one interview.** 23/37 learners were from West Yorkshire, with 34/37 living in POLAR4 Quintiles 1-2. (11 learners also completed a follow-up interview in the second phase of our primary research; see page 67). A significant proportion of learners we spoke to had parents who had been to university (p73) which may be a contributing factor to the attitudes and experiences described in this report.

Learners completed discussion groups alongside other members of the same ethnicity segment, with separate groups for KS4 and FE students, to facilitate the discussion of shared experiences within each group.

The questions and topics discussed were the same for all learners across both group and one-to-one formats, using a pre-scripted semi-structured interview format. All discussions and interviews were led by a trained qualitative researcher who was experienced in working with children and topics around education. Interviews and discussions took around one hour on average (with one-to-one interviews typically being slightly shorter and discussion groups being slightly longer) and all learners received a reward for taking part.

We spoke to 37 learners in our first phase of primary qualitative research including:
- 10 South Asian learners (5 KS4 and 5 FE)
- 9 Black African learners (4 KS4 and 5 FE)
- 7 Black Caribbean learners (4 KS4 and 3 FE)
- 8 Mixed Heritage learners (4 KS4 and 4 FE)
- 3 Polish learners (all FE)

In the following section, we discuss the key themes and insights emerging from our discussions with learners.

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

Identification and Labels

One important topic in relation to the challenges of young BAME people in education, which we discussed with learners toward the end of our interviews but provides important context at the start of this section, is the use of and identification with various racial and ethnic labels. We recognise that this can be a sensitive issue for many people from minority ethnic backgrounds and a difficult one for others to navigate. As such, we asked all learners if they were comfortable with our use of group identifying language for the purpose of our research discussions and to give them the opportunity to offer a more suitable alternative if needed, in the interests of a common language to describe all participants – while recognising their own individually varied and specific identities.

All learners we spoke to were happy for us to use the ethnicity segment labels used in this report – Black African, Black Caribbean, Mixed Heritage, Polish and South Asian. In addition, Black African and Black Caribbean participants sometimes referred to themselves simply as "Black", as did some Mixed Heritage participants. South Asian participants also sometimes referred to themselves simply as "Asian" or according to their specific background e.g. "Pakistani".

The complexity of identification and labelling was particularly apparent among Mixed Heritage participants, who sometimes referred to themselves as "Mixed Race" or occasionally "Black", and a topic that they were happy to discuss. Mixed Heritage learners we spoke to, by way of their definition, came from families of mixed ethnic backgrounds e.g. Black and White, White and South Asian or Black and South Asian. They acknowledged the difficulties that others, and they themselves, might have with their identification and labelling at times. Some described how they could be "seen as Black" or "White" by others in different contexts, one chose to identify simply as "Black", while another described how Mixed Heritage people might have different degrees of identification or positive or negative associations with different aspects of their ethnicity. Mixed Heritage participants described feeling separated or isolated from other more overtly homogenous ethnic social groups at school at times. As described on p39, the mixed ethnic background of these participants and influence of different cultures within their families appears to contribute to a sophisticated but challenging awareness of race and racial issues such as microaggressions, representation and diversity.

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

Use of 'BAME' and other labels

In line with the objectives of this research and the common language used in related literature, this report uses the term BAME as a collective term for people of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. However, this term was not used to describe participants in our research discussions and is not a term that is necessarily used by them. Indeed, the use of this term is itself a question within our evaluation.

We asked participants towards the end of our discussions whether they were familiar with the term BAME or its meaning. Around half of our FE participants were familiar with the term, while only a handful of KS4 participants were. Upon ascertaining understanding, and providing a consistent definition, we asked participants to what extent BAME was a label that they would identify with or how useful this, or other labels, might be. Again, responses were mixed.

Most participants acknowledged the potential usefulness of BAME, in some contexts, as an umbrella term to describe the experience of the various included ethnicities as a whole. However, many also pointed out the limitations of the term being used to describe the often very different experiences of more specific ethnicities, with a couple of participants pointing out how this might be used in educational and political contexts to deliberately blur the very different challenges and treatment of Black and Asian students in HE. For example, one learner suggested that "BAME" as well as terms like "people of colour" were used to shy away from addressing the experiences of "Black people" or other more specific ethnicities and that people should be more open and authentic about discussing and addressing these challenges more directly.

This is not to say that the term BAME should not be used in educational contexts, or for the purposes of reports like this, but that this should be used carefully and not to blur or avoid discussing the challenges of more specific ethnicities. This is why, in this report, we report and describe some of the shared experiences that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic learners might have, whilst also describing differences and challenges among more specific ethnicity segments. Educational institutions should ensure to keep this latter more specific perspective in focus, while being sensitive to and where possible guided by learners with regards to the use of any ethnicity labels in different contexts.

My experience of life is different. When I go to Nigeria, where my mum's from, I'm seen as a White person over there. Whereas here, I'm Black. I'm too this to be that and too that to be this.
Mixed Heritage KS4 participant

I think for some people, they might not know anything about that other side of them. I know for maybe some mixed race people; their dad wasn't present, and their dad was Black so they might have some anti-Blackness because of that. I think if you grew up with two people and immersed in both those worlds then it'll be different to a single-parent house and not knowing anything about your other half.
Mixed Heritage KS4 participant

I feel like you can't put such a diverse group of people into one term. My struggle would be completely different to someone Asian, or Polish. We all have different walks of life, and cultural differences. You'll see in politics, when they start talking about BAME – who are you referring to? Are you referring to Black people, Asians, or some Europeans? I would prefer it to be more specific. But I know that some White people find it uncomfortable to say, 'Black people' so they'll try say different things like 'people of colour', and that makes me think 'am I a pencil?' I'm just Black. Call me a Black person. I feel like they should come out of that being so scared of stepping on people's toes and just say Black people or East Asian. It will be more specific and limit stereotypes. Because, if someone who hears BAME and thinks about a Black person, when they're talking about an Asian person – it'll stop that from happening.
Black African FE participant

General Feelings about Education

In discussing learners' general experiences around and feelings toward education, we found that education was generally seen as important by all our participants. Only one participant, a Mixed Heritage FE learner, described having previously disregarded school but expressed some regret at having done so and was now looking to improve their skills in FE.

Experiences in education were mostly positive as a whole but varied by ethnicity segment as well as individually. Ethnicity plays a significant part in learners' experience in education, sometimes positively (e.g. cultural importance of education) but also negatively (experiences of discrimination, racism and other challenges) as described below:

Black African participants were the most likely to express the importance of education and the value of learning in and of itself (rather than qualifications or other benefits). Black African participants often put pressure on themselves to succeed. Black African participants' perceptions and experience of education were positive overall but can be negatively impacted by racism and discrimination (see page 39).

Education was also seen as important for Black Caribbean participants, who also felt some pressure to succeed. Black Caribbean participants were the most likely to describe experiencing overt racism (p39) while also pointing out institutional racism, lack of diversity (p46) and an awareness of prejudiced perceptions of their ethnicity having a negative impact on their educational experience.

Mixed Heritage participants' experience of education varied, with our sample consisting of learners from a mix of different parental ethnic and cultural backgrounds; however again education was seen as important and this was generally impressed upon learners by at least one parent. Mixed Heritage participants also frequently pointed to experiences of racism (p39), microaggressions and a lack of diversity in the curriculum (p46).

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

"
I come from a secondary school where I didn't get along with a lot of teachers or they clearly have favourites. So, when I moved to my college, the dynamic changed, because all the tutors were like me. In my A-levels I was predicted A* and they posted me on the school website. I feel like I can't slip up. I just always have to be the best. I just don't want to let everyone down.
Black African FE participant
"

"
I've enjoyed education, but I've had bad experiences with certain teachers because of ignorance. When I was in year 8, I did a GCSE in maths and I achieved a grade 7. When I went to year 9, we started getting put into sets. No one else had done a GCSE and I was probably the top mathematician in my year and they still tried to put me in the bottom set. What I was questioning was why is that and why would they do that. We brought it up and they tried to say I wasn't good enough. I'd already done my GCSE and got an A grade, so I don't understand why I'm not worthy of being in top set, never mind bottom set. And then I've also had ignorance from teachers – touching hair and saying the n-word, knowing they shouldn't be saying that.
Black Caribbean KS4 participant
"

"
I've had quite the fair share of racism. I remember I was walking home one time and this group walked by and were saying 'oh go back to your own country' and calling me a p-word and stuff and it wasn't nice. And I'm mixed race – part English and part Jamaican – so they didn't even insult me properly. But anyways, I remember in primary school – because I have a dark skin tone and dark hair on my arms – some kids picked up on that.
Mixed Heritage FE participant
"

Polish participants' experiences and perceptions of education in the UK were mostly positive. They expressed a belief that education in the UK is "better than Poland" as well as a perception that British children "don't appreciate" their education.

South Asian participants expressed mostly positive feelings about education as well as its importance. The experience of the South Asian learners we spoke to may be different from that of the other ethnicity segments in that they often attended diverse or high-proportion South Asian schools and subsequently were less likely to experience challenges associated with being a "minority". There were even some suggestions of positive perceptions of or benefits toward their ethnicity in education, such as being seen as "intelligent" and "hardworking".

There was a fairly common suggestion that **college is better than school**, mentioned by learners from all ethnicity segments, in terms of their experience of learning, relationships with students and racial challenges. Colleges are typically seen as more diverse and inclusive environments than schools, where students are more likely to have grown more mature and more aware and accepting of different ethnicities and cultures.

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

> *There are so many children here in Britain who disrespect the education they have. And when I was younger, I always felt like I definitely want to go to USA or UK and be there for the rest of my life because it's such a good opportunity that you can always do something and you have to use it and you have to be grateful for it, because other children don't have these opportunities.*
> *Polish FE participant*

> *The first primary school I was in was predominantly a White school and then I moved to a different all-Muslim school. My secondary school was quite diverse and jumps between different ethnic groups, which I think actually is better. Because at my second primary school, there's a lot of Muslim people because of being part of the South Asian community. Everyone was a lot more academic than my first school.*
> *South Asian FE participant*

> *When it comes to college, I think personally it's diverse. It's like you have freedom. It's not like in the secondary school where teachers told you what you need to do. You can be yourself and you can say what you want. You can be part of many societies and express yourself in any way.*
> *Polish FE participant*

Experiences with other Students

Participants across all ethnicity segments described spending time with friends and meeting people as being some of the most positive aspects of their educational experience. Inevitably, this varied by individual; with learners having their own personalities, experiences and challenges throughout school life, not necessarily related to their ethnicity.

However, fellow students could also be perpetrators of racism that had significantly impacted many of the learners we spoke to; particularly Black Caribbean, Black African and Mixed Heritage learners (see page 39). Learners expressed an acknowledgement and sentiment that children could be insensitive, rude or deliberately cruel at times, whether as a product of ignorance (a lack of understanding of racial or cultural differences), curiosity (e.g. "Why are you that colour?") or explicit racism; improved racial and cultural education clearly being required in any case (p88). Two of the three Polish learners we spoke to also described experiences of bullying tied to their language difficulties after moving to the UK in primary school, though this was not described as being related to their ethnicity per se and eased as they grew older and more adept at English.

Participants, especially Black African and South Asian participants, described a tendency toward self-segregation among same ethnicity-social groups within schools (e.g. Black African students spending time and forming friendship groups with other Black African students, South Asian students with other South Asian students, and so on). This may occur among different ethnicities (including White students) to differing extents depending on the demographic profile of particular schools. This wasn't described negatively by participants themselves, who tended to describe this is a natural tendency, but we as observers might question whether this could be indicative of and/or a potential contributing factor towards more overtly negative racial challenges. Mixed Heritage participants did describe this as a challenge however; their mixed ethnicity often leading them to feel or actively be isolated from other ethnicity groups (e.g. being "neither Black nor White").

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

GO HIGHER
West Yorkshire

OfS Uni Connect
Programme

COSMOS
ENGAGEMENT

"With my Black friends I definitely feel accepted. They're very accepting and very kind. As with my White friends, I usually feel accepted but there are times when I've felt left out or in bigger groups, I feel a bit ignored.
Mixed Heritage KS4 participant

"In school I've found that people of the same background are more likely to hang out together and each group will be mainly made up of the same ethnic background. Some people in the group aren't from the same background but they understand.
South Asian KS4 participant

"Sometimes the people at school can be quite narrowminded. Because my school is predominantly White, their views are quite offensive to others. Not seeing things from different perspectives. Not really having an idea on the way people look at the world. For example, seeing the world from a person of colour's point of view. Racism – they think 'oh it's just racism. It doesn't affect you that much'. But when it's said to you, it affects you a lot more and they just say 'get over it' .
Mixed Heritage FE participant

"I used to have White friends. And then as we grow older, you could just feel the differences, because there was stuff I wasn't allowed to do that they would be doing and they couldn't just respect that I don't do that stuff. I think they don't understand.
South Asian KS4 participant

Experiences with Teachers & Staff

Experiences and relationships with teachers and staff vary significantly by ethnicity segment as well as individual learners and staff members. Most participants described mostly positive relationships with teachers in terms of essential teaching and learning, however this was often marred by racism and discrimination (see page 38).

Black African participants described generally positive but not close relationships with teachers. They were more likely to speak to their parents than teachers for advice about the future. Black African learners were often stereotyped as loud and pointed to examples of teaching staff expressing (inaccurate) low expectations of learners as well as some examples of more overt racism.

Black Caribbean participants described mixed relationships with teachers; some speaking more frequently to teachers and others no more so than needed. Black Caribbean learners were frequently labelled negatively by teachers, set lower expectations for attainment, perceived as loud and misbehaving and targeted or punished unfairly.

Mixed Heritage participants experienced mixed relationships with teachers, finding some teachers supportive and others less so. They were also likely to experience discrimination and microaggressions from teachers; being ignored, having names confused (with other Mixed Heritage students) and punished disproportionately.

South Asian participants described the most positive relationships with teachers and staff, with the consideration that many of these were in diverse or high-proportion South Asian schools or areas, where staff were "used to" South Asian students. There was only one slightly more negative experience described by a South Asian student in relation to a Science teacher demonstrating an apparent lack of religious understanding or sensitivity when teaching evolution to a classroom with many Muslim students.

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

> *I don't really speak to my teachers about my choices. I just I don't feel the need to. I think I just process what I want to do in my own head, reflecting on it. And if there really is anything that I want to say about it, I just tell my parents. But I've never talked to my teachers about it.*
> *Black African KS4 participant*

> *I think it's easier to get labelled by teachers when you're in school. I feel like they'll be looking out for you a bit more, to see if you misbehave or not listening. I feel like it's easier for them to pick up on that.*
> *Black Caribbean FE participant*

> *One thing that is very normalised, and is quite annoying, is they'll mix me and another person who has a similar skin tone. And the teacher would say 'sorry you just look alike'. And we don't look alike at all. That's kind of annoying and it's really normalised.*
> *Mixed Heritage KS4 participant*

> *Well, most of them are like from here or from Leeds so they're all like local. So obviously know South Asians and they're all OK with it and know how to engage.*
> *South Asian FE participant*

> *The teachers didn't care if a student was bullied. If other students were racist to different students from different countries. They just told, OK, just ignore it.*
> *Polish FE participant*

Polish participants described some positive experiences with teachers, however two also suggested a general lack of concern or attention from teachers and staff toward issues of bullying and racism in school.

Despite many negative experiences with teachers and staff described above, and in the subsequent sections experience of racism and discrimination (p38), there were also positive examples of supportive relationships between learners and staff, whether teachers or careers/advisory staff, among all ethnicity segments, that had helped participants in their studies or identification of and preparations for future pathways. Across our discussions with 37 learners, there were around a dozen mentions of teachers and staff supporting participants with; choices around whether to go to university or do an apprenticeship, which university to go to, subject choice and support with application processes. This not to say that more participants haven't experienced support from teachers and staff, but this was the extent of specific examples covered in our discussions.

Inevitably, the quality of teaching and support provided, and the expression or underlying nature of any negative beliefs or actions towards students of any ethnicity, vary depending on the individual teacher or staff member. However, the objectives must be to ensure that the teaching and support provided to all students is of as high a standard as possible, that staff do not hold or express any negative beliefs toward students of any ethnicity or cultural background, and that any form of discrimination expressed by staff be effectively dealt with to prevent re-occurrence. We discuss more about how these objectives could be achieved in the later section around 'Support & Action Required' (p80).

I'd really like to be a lawyer. I remember in primary school; my teacher was talking about university and I said I would really love to go to Oxford – that would be amazing. And she said she had a best friend that went there so it's not impossible; you can go there.
Mixed Heritage KS4 participant

Racism & Discrimination

Having referred briefly to the issues of racism and discrimination in the previous sections around experiences with students, teachers and education, we will now look at these issues in more detail.

Participants referred to experiences of racism and discrimination in a variety of forms, including:

- Teachers confusing students' names with others of similar ethnicity or appearance
- Assuming that students are "foreign" or "don't speak English" based on their appearance
- Hair touching (by students and staff)
- Ignoring the perspectives of students of a particular ethnicity, or denying their opportunity to have their say
- A lack of consideration or support for different racial and cultural perspectives; a "White perspective" only
- Expression of negative racial or cultural stereotypes
- Targeting for criticism or blame of racial issues – e.g. some participants reported being unfairly targeted for criticism of the Black Lives Matter movement
- Rejection or isolation from student social groups on the grounds of race or religion
- Low expectations expressed by teachers for student attainment based on their ethnicity e.g. placing in wrong sets, low predicted grades
- Unfair or disproportionate labelling, targeting or punishment for misbehaviour from staff toward students of a particular ethnicity
- Unreasonable demands imposed by teachers, or lack of support for students' challenges who may e.g. have difficulties with English
- Unfair provision of opportunities to students based on ethnicity
- Explicit racial slurs and name-calling
- Bullying on the grounds of race or religion – either online or in person
- A lack of support from teachers or staff for learners who experience expressions of racism, as listed. Teachers or staff "passing off", "playing down" or "turning a blind eye" to expressions of racism

The frequency and form of racism experienced by learners varied significantly by ethnicity, school and individual. Many participants reported no experiences of racism whatsoever, while others described this as being a frequent and significant factor in their education. The following is a summary of the racism described by the learners we spoke to; however again, this does not imply that any of these issues do not arise among other groups. The objective should of course be to eliminate all such behaviours and to protect all students from experiencing them.

Black Caribbean participants were most likely to experience frequent and overt racism. Black Caribbean participants were frequently labelled negatively by teachers, set lower expectations for attainment, put in the wrong sets, perceived as loud and misbehaving and targeted or punished unfairly. They were also mostly likely to receive racial slurs. Black Caribbean participants expressed an awareness of negative perceptions of their ethnicity that can weigh on their minds and impact negatively on their school life.

Black African participants experienced many of the same challenges as Black Caribbean participants including negative stereotyping and low expectations, as well as some examples of more overt racism and racial slurs. Black African learners we spoke to expressed a sense of strong will and motivation to succeed in spite of these challenges.

Mixed Heritage participants were most likely to describe experiencing "microaggressions" (term used by learners themselves), i.e. subtle differences in treatment by teachers who may not be aware that they are behaving in a racist or discriminatory way but nonetheless have a significant negative impact on the recipient and reveal a lack of racial awareness or sensitivity e.g. confusing students' names with others of similar ethnicity or appearance or assuming that students are "foreign" or "don't speak English" based on their appearance. Mixed Heritage learners we spoke to demonstrated a sophisticated awareness of racism and related issues (even among KS4 learners), possibly as a result of the mixed ethnic composition of their families (two sides of their family being from different ethnic backgrounds), and the challenges they experienced and described around identification and belonging within a particular ethnic group (see p29).

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

In PE especially, I felt really insecure. I remember one of them started calling me a monkey because my arms were hairy. I remember as well, in high school, one of the kids in my English class called me the n-word and he said it out loud and he was White, so it was very shocking. And everyone just sort of laughed it off because it was really awkward, but you shouldn't be saying that kind of thing. The teacher did probably overhear but she didn't say anything about it, so I think that kind of made it worse.
Mixed Heritage FE participant

In high school it was a bit rocky. I feel like I was a good student, but I used to get told off for no reason. I feel like my school had a strong prejudice towards people of colour, and it was very prevalent. In the classroom, they would talk to minorities as a whole. It didn't matter who – as long as you're a minority you get treated differently than a White kid. Even if I was saying something polite, the teacher would still find some way to tell me off. I found myself getting in trouble and my parents were asking why I kept getting into trouble. It's not my fault, but what can you say? Especially when you go to a school where all the teachers are White, who are you going to tell? They all have the same mentality.
Black African FE participant

Two of the three Polish learners we spoke to described experiences of bullying tied to their language difficulties after moving to the UK in primary school, though this was not described as being related to their ethnicity per se and eased as they grew older and more adept at English. They also referred to a teacher putting unreasonable demands upon their English. They also suggested a general lack of concern or attention from teachers and staff toward issues of bullying and racism in school generally. Our third Polish participant reported no experience of discrimination.

South Asian learners we spoke to reported fewer and less overt experiences of racism than Black Caribbean, Black African or Mixed Heritage students but did refer to some negative reactions to headscarves; to one example of a Science teacher's insensitive presentation of evolution and another teacher falsely assuming that a parent couldn't speak English. Again, it is worth noting that many of the South Asian learners attended diverse or high-proportion South Asian schools and so did not experience being perceived as a "minority" as much as they may have done elsewhere (as described by learners).

Dealing with Racism & Discrimination

One might expect or hope that the experiences of racism described in this section are infrequent, or that once they occur they are swiftly dealt with and prevented from re-occurring. Unfortunately this was not the case; certainly not for the Black Caribbean, Black African or Mixed Heritage learners we spoke to, despite the parents of these learners often reporting these matters to schools – often repeatedly.

While more overt instances of racism (e.g. racial slurs, bullying) were often dealt with at the time, it was apparent when speaking to our learners that more subtle forms of racism and discrimination persisted in schools, often in the form of microaggressions that weren't recognised by anyone except the victim. When such ongoing issues were "normalised" (term used by learners themselves), this could be a consistent challenge for learners to deal with. When speaking to learners about these experiences, it was impressive to hear their resilience and motivation to focus on their education in spite of these challenges, but also saddening that this was seemingly necessary. The objective must be to overcome these challenges from the top-down, so that learners don't have to.

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

At my primary school, I was the darkest girl in my class. We had a silly school play about 'Strictly Come Dancing'. One of the judges at the time was Alesha Dixon and they wanted someone to play her. They picked me to play her, which was surprising. And I remember, after that play I thought maybe they'll pick me for more roles, but they never did. Some teachers – and I have an afro – would touch my hair as well. And you won't see them going round touching other kids' hair, that's straight. So, it was a bit odd. At the time, I was young, so I didn't really think it was anything. Sometimes I think I should have said something at the time.
Mixed Heritage FE participant

It's kind of hard and if you're in a White majority school. They might be given opportunities before you're given opportunities. But that might just be for Black people; I feel like Asians don't get as much discrimination as Black people. Something I've seen in school, with the school I went to being majority Asian, the Black people faced a lot more struggles. As with everywhere, if there's a majority, the majority gets put first. They struggled to have a say in things and I think teachers also prioritised the Asian kids first.
South Asian FE participant

It was our art teacher in our previous school. She was like 'speak in English, speak in English, we want to know what you're talking about.' So we did our best to speak in English, but we didn't really like it. We wanted the freedom to speak in our language.
Polish FE participant

Representation

Following on from the previous section around expressions of racism and negative beliefs about people of various ethnicities, we now consider where these beliefs might come from and how and where they impact learners.

We asked learners across ethnicity segments about their perceptions of representation in the media and society. Learners from all ethnicity segments except Polish expressed an awareness of some negative representation of their ethnicity in the media (though this is not to say that there isn't any negative representation of Polish people, only that our Polish participants didn't comment on this).

Again, correlating with the severity and frequency of racism as described in the previous section, Black Caribbean participants reported the most negative representation of their ethnicity in the media. Learners suggested that Black Caribbean people are typically shown in "comedy" and are presented as "unintelligent".

Black African participants referred to an underrepresentation of their ethnicity in the media. There were some mixed opinions among these learners, referring to negative representation of Black people generally but also some more positive perceptions of Black African people specifically in terms of educational ability.

The experience of Mixed Heritage participants around this topic was again complex due to the mix of racial and cultural backgrounds within this group and their varying identification with ethnic labels (p26). They typically pointed to the negative representation and perceptions of Black people, as described above, with which many of them identified, as well as negative associations with Mixed Heritage people and crime.

South Asian participants expressed some awareness of negative representation and associations of their ethnicity with terrorism, as well as women and girls wearing headscarves being "suppressed". However, they also referred to some positive associations of South Asian people with being "intelligent", "hardworking" and pursuing respectable professions like "doctors" and "lawyers".

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

Obviously Black people have been shown to be lower in terms of attainment in education. But I feel like Black Caribbeans are even at the bottom of the Black community for that. For Black Africans, there's a big thing about Nigerians being doctors and engineers and lawyers. But you don't really see that with Black Caribbeans. We're usually shown in the entertainment industry as being comedians. I'm just wanting more role models.
Black Caribbean KS4 participant

The only places that Black African or Caribbean people are presented is sport related. I feel kind of upset to see that not everybody is represented equally.
Black African KS4 participant

Some people just to have very negative opinions, for the wrong reason, like terrorism for example. And I think people just don't understand. And so they'll hear one thing and then they'll latch onto that, and not fully understand the concepts of it. And there are negative views that are fuelled by things like media and just misinformation.
South Asian FE participant

I feel, when it comes to the media, it shows us as hardworking and trying to get an education. I think the majority of Asians are shown as going on to be doctors or lawyers but mainly medicine. I've seen a few posts in the media though of Asians being lazy as well.
South Asian FE participant

Living with Misrepresentation and Stereotypes

Learners described the challenges of living with other people's negative perceptions of their ethnicity as something they were continuously aware of and had to try to overcome. Black African learners in particular described "toning down" their appearance or behaviours at times and in certain contexts (e.g. university or job interviews) in order to avoid negative judgement (e.g. loud) by White people, while others pointed out that this was counter-productive and that people should not have to tone down their behaviour or identity to make others feel more comfortable.

> *I feel like the minorities in my school – in my year especially – we all got together more. It was pretty segregated. White kids over there; the rest of you over there. For whatever reason, we weren't allowed to have our hoods up and we always get told to have them down. If you're in a group of more than ten, we'd always be called aggressive. There are about twenty White folks over there, doing whatever, jumping on each other, shouting, but no teacher would ever say anything to them. Because of that, I learnt that – you can tell how someone is from when you first meet them. If I feel like the person I'm talking to might have these prejudices about Black people or may think we are a bit rowdy or they're a bit standoffish, I make sure to tone switch. I'll be less colloquial, dress a certain way. With my hair – I don't really do anything because I have my hair out usually. But I just make sure I'm not too loud. Some people say I'm a bit aggressive, which isn't true. So, I try to switch to make sure they're comfortable.*
> *Black African FE participant*

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

Diversity

Another key topic affecting learners of different ethnicities is diversity, or lack thereof, in terms of their fellow students, staff and their educational curriculum and content.

Inevitably, diversity of students varies by school and location. South Asian learners we spoke to typically came from diverse or high-proportion South Asian schools and areas, where staff were "used to" South Asian students, and so did not experience being perceived as a "minority" as much as they may have done elsewhere (as described by learners). At the other end of the scale, Polish learners we spoke to found themselves as one of very few if not the only Polish people in their schools – though this didn't appear to lead to them being negatively targeted on the grounds of their ethnicity.

The experience of Black African, Black Caribbean and Mixed Heritage participants varied individually, but they typically found themselves within a sizeable minority, but a minority nonetheless, within their schools; it appeared that this level of representation among the student population – and/or perhaps the more negative and persistent attitudes towards these ethnicities – made these learners vulnerable to negative targeting or treatment by other students or staff. Black African, Black Caribbean and Mixed Heritage learners often found themselves unfairly associated with other students of similar ethnicity, "labelled" as misbehaving and disproportionately punished by teachers on this basis.

Black African, Black Caribbean and Mixed Heritage learners all pointed to the lack of diversity among teachers and staff and the lack of role models that they could identify with as a significant problem, with few if any black teachers at the schools of most of the learners we spoke to. This is a key area for improvement, which we cover in more detail from page 85. Black African, Black Caribbean and Mixed Heritage learners also pointed to a "White curriculum", lacking in Black history or different ethnic and cultural perspectives, as being both a symptom and a cause of continuing institutional racism in education. A similar sentiment was expressed by one of our Polish learners in relation to the overwhelming focus on White British authors in English Literature.

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

> *At my school and college, we're a majority as I live in a high-Pakistani/Asian town. But I feel in other places it might not be the same. I have a niece that lives in Luton, and it's not a big Pakistani area, so she's had to tone down her culture to live there. This might happen to a lot of Asian kids that don't live in majority Asian areas, basically to blend in. Where I live, culture is everything. But at places where there are not a majority of Asian people, it might be a bit different for them.*
> *South Asian FE participant*

> *My school is mainly White people and there's a few Asians, so it was my friends in the year that were mainly the Black people. We got called gangs – we'd be walking around in big groups. It was like they were threatened by us because of our colour. Not really me, but when it came to the boys, they always got treated different to other people in the year that weren't the same colour. I always viewed it as racism, in a way. It's all being judgmental and stereotyping, but I didn't agree with it.*
> *Mixed Heritage FE participant*

> *In my high school all the teachers were White. Until recently, we had a Black teacher coming and she tried to help the African and Caribbean community because some teachers just wouldn't understand the problems we have.*
> *Black African KS4 participant*

Parental Influence

Previous studies conducted by Cosmos have demonstrated that parental influence is a key factor for BAME learners in education. As such, we included a number of questions in our discussions with learners, exploring the role their parents and families had in their education and future choices. We found that parents of all the learners we spoke to were involved in their children's education, with the extent and form of this involvement varying across ethnicity segments.

Parents of Black African participants were described as regularly and actively involved in their children's education, holding high expectations for their children to do well in education – with university being "expected" as the norm. Black African parents tended to "focus on the negatives" such as subject areas in which their children may be struggling, with little praise for success. Learners suggested that this could add to the "pressure" and "stress" they felt, but that overall they were grateful for the support and motivation their parents provided. Black African parents often had a supporting role in their children's choice of subjects, with a couple of learners we spoke to having chosen subjects that were actively suggested by their parents. Black African learners were more inclined to seek advice from their parents, rather than teachers, regarding their future choices.

Parents of Black Caribbean participants were described as being quite involved in conversations about education; they were generally supportive and wanted the best for their children. They tended to offer views on subject choices but these are not forced, wanting their children to be happy and do well in the areas they choose. Black Caribbean learners described their parents getting involved in raising issues of racism at school.

Mixed Heritage participants described their parents as being regularly and actively involved in their education, but not pressuring. Parents were quite involved in subject choices, with Mixed Heritage learners often influenced by their parents' own experiences with subject or career areas. Mixed Heritage learners seemed to benefit from a variety of perspectives on education, with their parents coming from different racial and cultural backgrounds. Mixed Heritage learners also described their parents supporting them with issues of racism at school.

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

> " *Not all the time, but sometimes I feel a little pressure. I feel from my parents there's the constant expectation to do well, and I think it's valid, but it can sometimes be a bit daunting. And then also, in school is very competitive. So you know, you just want to be on top.* "
>
> *Black African KS4 participant*

> " *If ever I felt like I was being treated differently I would just let my mum know. Then she would maybe call the school, depending on the situation, and just get their point of view and see what they had to say. I'm appreciative of that because she would always call them if I felt like I was being mistreated. I think it made them think about things a bit more and be more careful with what they're saying and doing.* "
>
> *Black Caribbean FE participant*

> " *I feel like it's always been a big topic in my family. My mum went to uni and so did my mum's family. Education is really important in her culture and it's always been 'oh you go to uni and do this', but they always have ideas about what they want me to do. My mum's family want me to do law, but my parents want me to do whatever makes me happy and I think that's really important.* "
>
> *Mixed Heritage KS4 participant*

> " *I think sometimes if someone's done good and your parents see that and see others talking about how good they have done, and they want them to talk about how good you have done as well. And then they want you to do certain things to get higher jobs.* "
>
> *South Asian KS4 participant*

Parents of South Asian participants were described as being fairly involved in their children's education. South Asian parents tended to talk about their children's academic progress with the wider family, which could give learners a sense of pressure. There was said to be considerable focus and "respect" around career and subject choice within the South Asian community, with children expected to pursue more traditionally respectable professional career and subject areas like medicine or law and discouraged from less traditional subject areas.

Parents of Polish participants were described as supportive but relaxed. A language barrier may be a reason for this, for parents who are not proficient at English, as well as an apparent lack of understanding of the UK education system, which participants described as being quite different to that of Poland.

The overall finding when discussing the role and influence of parents was that they have a significant supporting role in BAME learners' education. This can add to "pressure" for learners (particularly Black African and South Asian participants) but the overall feeling is one of "support". It is therefore important that any support or advice provided to BAME learners to help them choose or prepare for their future options complements the advice that they receive at home and that parents are on board with the support and advice provided via schools. In the case of Black African or South Asian parents, this may involve more information about the career benefits of non-traditional subject choices or pathways, to reduce pressure on learners to pursue specific "respectable" careers, while more support in explaining the UK education system and pathways to Polish parents might help to offer more informed support to their children.

The role and advice of parents in BAME learners' education was also explored further in our 'Learner-Parent Interviews' (see page 70).

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

Future Intentions

All of the Black African participants we spoke to planned to go to college and university, with even KS4 participants having started to research universities. Some of FE participants were already considering a Masters or a PhD, demonstrating the high value we saw placed on education among Black African participants and their families, as discussed in the previous sections. Black African participants held a strong career focus and were highly motivated.

Similarly, all South Asian participants we spoke to planned to go to college and university and were confident about their future prospects.

Among Black Caribbean participants, all FE participants planned to go to university with many actively researching and applying for universities at the time of interview. Most KS4 participants were also interested in university with a couple also interested in apprenticeships.

Among Mixed Heritage participants, all 5 girls we spoke to wanted to go to university, while the 3 boys we spoke to did not. There were cited reasons for all of these boys opting against university (including their academic ability and preferred career pathway), and we did not find any wider evidence of such a gender difference among Mixed Heritage learners, so this appears to be simply due to individual differences within our sample (see note below). Mixed Heritage participants also expressed more interest in apprenticeships than other ethnicity segments, including girls who preferred university but had also considered apprenticeships as an option.

All three Polish participants we spoke to intended to go to university, although they seemed to be relatively relaxed and more motivated by enjoyment rather than any family expectation.

It is worth noting that most of the BAME learners we spoke to who planned to go to university had not really considered any "other options". This prompts the question as to whether this is really an *informed decision* or rather learners simply following what is "expected" (particularly for Black African and South Asian participants). This is not to suggest that this is not the right choice for these learners, but that we should strive to ensure that all learners are as informed about all their options as possible, including apprenticeships.

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

I think it's an expectation. No one asks you, 'do you want to go to university?' It's more like, 'what are you going to study when you go to university?' So it's not a question as to whether you want to go. It's compulsory.
Black African KS4 participant

I want to do a medicine degree. Even if I decide after the first five years that I don't want to go specialise in anything, I'll be a GP. If three years later I say okay, let me go specialise in something – there's so many different fields. If I want to be a foot doctor, I can be a foot doctor. If I want to be a heart surgeon, I can be a heart surgeon. So, that's what I like about medicine - that flexibility.
Black African FE participant

I want to go to university. I feel like it would give me qualifications and I would probably get a job that inspires me.
Polish FE participant

I got into a course on Boom Satsuma – which is kind of a sixth form. It's a creative course on gaming. So, I'll be doing that for 2 years after I finish school. My dad emailed me a link to their website about a year or two ago because it looked interesting to him, and I still remembered it when I was picking out a college. So, I decided to go over there and have an interview. A week after the interview I was accepted. So, I've had my eye on it for a while. I haven't looked further, but I doubt I would be going to university. Because, I think once I'm done with my requirements to do school, I'll just try to find a job.
Mixed Heritage FE participant

Subject Choice

As well as asking about learners' future plans and likelihood to continue studying, we also asked them about their current and future subject choices and why they chose them; to what extent these were driven by enjoyment, future careers, parents or any other factors.

Black African participants were typically more career-focused than those we spoke to from other ethnicity segments and had professional careers in mind such as medicine, accounting and engineering. Parents could have a significant role in their children's choice of subjects.

Again, this was also similar for South Asian participants, among whom the parental and cultural perceptions and "respect" around professional career and subject areas were apparent.

Black Caribbean participants expressed interest in a variety of subject choices including theatre and performance, game design, medicine, journalism and mathematics. They tended to be more driven by enjoyment rather than specific careers per se.

Mixed Heritage participants had a variety of subject interests and overall showed a relatively even mix between enjoyment and career motivation.

Polish participants had a variety of subject interests including science/medicine, film/media and art. These choices were all aligned with the participants' preferred careers, but they seemed to be following these because of their own enjoyment rather than any external pressure.

Across our discussions with 37 learners there were only a handful of clear cases of parents choosing their children's subjects, but parental advice and expectations could still be influential for many more participants, particularly among Black African and South Asian segments. It could be that parents' influence over subject choices may be more subtle and effective over time, rather than via any explicit involvement in decisions. However, participants across all ethnicity segments generally expressed that they could "choose what I want" and that parental influence over these decisions was more supportive than forceful, with participants often "checking" the options they were considering with their parents.

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

> *I was going to do medicine because my mum wanted me to do medicine. But I flopped biology. I now study A-level maths and level 3 engineering. I actually like it. My highest GCSE grades were in physics, maths and DT, and I like those. I've applied to university for mechanical engineering.*
>
> *Black Caribbean FE participant*

> *I feel everyone is a big supporter, such as South Asian parents. But if it was medicine, law, dentistry, engineering, something like we have to go uni for, they would be so much more supportive because they want you to go uni. They want to say my son and my daughter's got this degree or that degree but if it was something else, like something more hands on do with an apprenticeship, they might not be as understanding.*
>
> *South Asian FE participant*

> *I chose drama because that's always been something I've been really interested in and I feel like I thrive in more creative subjects. And I chose media because, again, it's something I'm really interested in. I chose history because it's just really fascinating.*
>
> *Mixed Heritage KS4 participant*

> *I'm following my childhood dream, which is obviously to become an artist. I'm not sure what type of an artist, maybe fine art or a digital art. I've always wanted to do that and just start selling my art maybe and be recognised in the artistic and museum society.*
>
> *Polish FE participant*

University Perceptions*

In line with learners' 'future intentions', as described in the previous section, BAME learners we spoke to generally held positive perceptions of university. However, the specific elements of university they found appealing, or concerning, varied by ethnicity segment.

In line with their high expectations for success and value placed upon education by their families, Black African participants saw university as "essential" for a better future and career. Black African participants were most likely to value learning in and of itself as well as the experience and independence of university life. Workload, "self-teaching" and being away from home were described as potential challenges for some, while some also voiced concerns about issues of racism at university. Going to a "diverse" university was important for some Black African participants, but less so for others.

Black Caribbean participants also held positive perceptions of university, with independence and life experience again being seen as key benefits, alongside education and employability. Black Caribbean participants pointed out that some universities are more diverse than others and that they would prefer to attend a diverse and inclusive university. It was important for Black Caribbean participants to find people at university that they can relate to. They also noted a lack of representation, or false representation, of Black students in university promotional materials, with comments suggesting that this had come into greater focus following the Black Lives Matter movement.

Mixed Heritage participants also held positive perceptions of university, with independence and social life being seen as key benefits, alongside education. They expressed some concerns about workload, pressure and missing home. Like Black Caribbean participants, they would like to go to a diverse university and noted that representations of diversity at some universities may be false. They also expressed an awareness of self-segregation or ethnicity-based social groups at university.

*Note: While this research explores how to support BAME learners in progressing to higher education generally (inclusive of other non-university HEPs), universities were central to our discussions with participants who did not directly refer to other forms of HEP.

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

I think if you go to university and get a degree, it makes you feel secure. Because going to university is seen as a requirement for most people and is a goal that most people think you should do.
Black African FE participant

I think it gives you life skills and independence. Especially if you move away from home. The places I want to go to are quite far, like down South, so it gives you that independence.
Black Caribbean FE participant

Choosing one more towards London, there'll be a bigger Black community so I might be a bit more comfortable. All my life I've gone to predominantly White schools and I'm bored of it. I want to be around people with the same culture as me and have the same experiences.
Black Caribbean KS4 participant

I also think that even though we can view people being in the same group of their race as racism, I feel like it's also 'stay to your comfort zone'. Obviously, you can relate to people of your own ethnicity, so I feel like there's that as well.
Mixed Heritage FE participant

I think you probably get like a bit more freedom. Being in an ethnic minority, being a girl especially, parents like to protect you because they see you as vulnerable and still young. So they just don't let you go out as much. You'll probably get more freedom. So I think that'll be a good thing and it'll be fun.
South Asian FE participant

Polish participants expressed positive perceptions of university, with independence and social life being key motivations, as well as education. They voiced some concerns about workload, travel and finance as well as some concern that language might be difficult. There was also some concern about choosing subjects at university, that this will be a tough decision to make or change. Polish participants perceived that university in the UK is diverse, with people all over the world coming to study in the UK because of the quality of education provided.

South Asian participants were mainly interested in university for the purpose of career progression. Some expressed an interest in increased "freedom" but as a whole, South Asian learners could be less attracted to "student life" than other (White) students. South Asian parents often wanted their children to stay at home or close to home during university. Student finance was the most common concern mentioned by South Asian participants. There was also one mention of positive discrimination possibly helping South Asian learners in their applications to university.

Diversity, Representation and Racism at University

Diversity of student population at university was clearly important for the Black Caribbean, Black African and Mixed Heritage learners we spoke to. Black Caribbean and Mixed Heritage participants in particular expressed a preference towards diverse and inclusive universities and were critical of the lack of or sometimes false representation of different ethnicities at some universities. HEPs should obviously strive toward fair opportunities and enrolment of students from all ethnicities, but should also strive for authenticity in the representation of different ethnicities in their promotional material, including real students and their perspectives, as false and tokenistic representation can be easily spotted by learners.

Another factor which held significant weight on the perspectives of prospective university applicants was the experience of friends and family at university. Learners with friends or relatives who have had positive experiences at university were likely to hold positive perspectives, while those who heard of negative experiences with regards to race were understandably more likely to be concerned about experiencing similar issues. This highlights the continuing importance of addressing any race-related challenges at universities, to ensure that any current or potential students from BAME backgrounds are as safe and comfortable as can be.

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

> *Something I've noticed is quite a lot of places make the effort to show people of colour. There are always the poster people: there's one person with a headscarf, one Black person, and one White person. It's nice that they care, but they shouldn't have to make the effort to. It should just be evident when going to visit them. It's nice that they say 'oh, we're diverse' and stuff but it shouldn't be a show. It should just be face value. And if that's an accurate representation of the university then that's fine, but otherwise it's a bit tacky.*
>
> *Mixed Heritage FE participant*

> *I heard some horrific stories of White students yelling the 'n-word' at a Black student. I think four out of five universities I've applied to are Russell Group, and they tend to have more White people than Black people. Two weeks ago, I got a conditional offer, and I was kind of scared, because if I go there I'm worried what it will be like.*
>
> *Black African FE participant*

> *My sister's doing a film and TV course and was assigned a role as part of a group. One of the kids made a comment about Jamaicans being idiots and they were talking about doing blackface and that's not suitable for a TV show at all. My sister was really upset about it and I was too when I heard about it. It was on the video chat that they did and it was really bad. He was saying stuff about Nazis, which was awful and really horrible to read. They're sorting things out now, because you shouldn't be made to feel uncomfortable because of your race, especially when you're going into places of education. It's worried me a little bit, going to uni, but I'm just hoping not every uni is like that.*
>
> *Mixed Heritage FE participant*

Apprenticeships

Of the 37 learners we spoke to, only one (a Mixed Heritage boy in FE) planned to do an apprenticeship as his first choice. Only around five participants described considering or having considered or looked into apprenticeships, with most of these being Mixed Heritage.

Participants who discussed apprenticeships demonstrated a reasonable understanding of their basic structure and benefits i.e. working and earning while learning. However it may be that participants didn't know the full range of benefits and options that apprenticeships provide, with one Polish learner pointing out the limited and gender-specific nature of apprenticeships options they had been presented with.

While university (which was the preferred destination for most participants) might well be the best option for those that we spoke to, again it is worth considering to what extent this was a fully informed decision or a case of going along with (family or other) expectations. Without dismissing the challenges experienced by BAME learners in university, as evidenced by the BAME Awarding Gap, and while working to address these issues, it may also be the case that some of these learners would be more attracted and perhaps better suited to apprenticeships if these options were more fully and effectively presented to them.

> *I want to go to uni because I want to get more experience in the subjects I'm studying. If I don't go to uni I'd love to do an apprenticeship because that would also be very helpful to me. I feel apprenticeships would be more immersive because you'd be working but you get paid as well, which is pretty good. I think I'd enjoy it because I would understand things better.*
> *Mixed Heritage FE participant*

> *I'm going to college but after that I don't know whether I should get a degree-apprenticeship or go to university, but I still want to get a degree. It's learning whilst on the job, but you'll be doing exams and get qualifications.*
> *Black Caribbean KS4 participant*

I've just started with my subjects and I'm not over the moon about studying more in the future. My family and I were thinking of a job or apprenticeship first. I haven't gotten my head around university and I don't think I'm cut out for it. I like the idea of getting straight into the workspace. It's an educational thing and you get paid as well, so I thought it was the best option. I want to do something I would enjoy though and not do it just for the money. I don't really speak to my parents about my education all the time because I really have my head set on an apprenticeship or a job. My dad's side of the family all went university, so they encourage me to go. But if I don't want to go then I don't really have to. My mum wants me to be happy and do whatever I want to do in life.
Mixed Heritage FE participant

We did have a lot of people coming in from different apprenticeship businesses and talking about how you can develop yourself through these. It's been hard for some girls especially, that there was not enough apprenticeships for the girls. It was beauty or makeup. What about the people who have different interests? There is way more for boys, so I think that was really unequal. If there was anything to change, it would definitely be to give more apprenticeships for girls so they don't have to do only hair and beauty because it's kind of stereotyping. And they also act like the boys should be working in a building area. No, there that women that are engineers and they do it. There's less of them but there shouldn't be, in my opinion.
Polish FE participant

Supporting Progression

We asked learners to tell us about any support or activities they had been provided or involved in, via their school or college, to help them in their decisions or preparations around future study or career pathways; how helpful this may or may not have been and why. The answers varied significantly by individual and school, with some participants describing having received a range of support and opportunities, and others little or none. Broadly speaking, the support provided to learners to help with their progression, and their relative success and failure, are described under the following headings:

Support from Teachers

Participants' relationships with teachers varied with individual teachers as well as some common themes within ethnicity segments around their challenges with teachers (see page 35). Inevitably, students did not have a close relationship with all their teachers, but around a dozen learners we spoke to referred to at least one teacher from whom they had sought or received some advice or support around their future educational pathways. Often this would be a form tutor or the teacher of subject that the learner was interested in pursuing in further study, and included advice around universities, courses or support with applications.

These positive learner-teacher relationships and support were more frequent at FE level than at KS4, with learners at college/sixth-form having a more relaxed and informal relationship with teachers than at school, being one step closer to HE and so in greater need of support and also more likely to be spending more time with a teacher of a subject they are interested in studying. While one would not expect learners to have such relationships with all their teachers, we would hope that learners would be comfortable to turn to and receive useful support from more of their teachers if and when they might need it. In this regard, some of the negative experiences with and perceptions of teachers experienced by BAME learners (see pages 35 and 38) may serve as a barrier, particularly for Black African and Black Caribbean learners, and schools should strive to ensure that teaching staff are trained to avoid such problems and are encouraged to support learners of all racial backgrounds equally.

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

> *Me and my form tutor, we're really close. Any problems I just go and talk to her and she'll sort it out. When it came to applying for unis, some stuff happened during lockdown, so I was a bit behind in my personal statement. I wrote it literally the week of application deadlines. And trying to do all of that – she really helped me through it. I applied and then got my conditional offers. And it's really thanks to her keeping me sane.*
> *Black African FE participant*

> *Secondary school, I would say, definitely there was some support, but it wasn't obvious. Really you would have to go to see a career supervisor that might help you find what you need. There has been a lot of experiences with teachers. Obviously, everybody is different and every child needs to be treated according to their needs, whatever they need.*
> *Polish FE participant*

> *There were booths at the job fair that I didn't quite understand. There was one that was just baking cakes and it was supposed to be about food and everyone was just going to get cakes, and no one was really learning about what they do there.*
> *Mixed Heritage KS4 participant*

> *In assembly one time, my school brought in lawyers and paralegals. The way they presented it came across quite boring and at that point I wanted to do something in law, but it put me off almost. If that's how they're talking about it, it doesn't seem that fun.*
> *Mixed Heritage KS4 participant*

Support from Careers Advisors, Mentors and other staff

Participants described receiving some of the same kinds of support and guidance (advice and support around university applications, course choice etc) from specialist careers advisors, mentors and other similar staff in schools and colleges, as described of teachers above; though less frequently. The provision and impact of such support appeared to vary significantly by school and individual learner. Again, there were positive examples of participants who had benefited from such support but also many who reported no interaction with or benefit from these even when available.

Participants suggested that even where such support was available it was not always obvious, attractive or accessible. From our other research and work in the education sector, Cosmos understands that learners are not necessarily always keen to access or use careers advice or guidance and often need encouragement, persistence and rapport with staff in these areas to do so. These barriers are likely to be greater for BAME learners and particularly Black African, Black Caribbean and Mixed Heritage learners, based on our findings discussed so far, and so these learners might need even greater encouragement and effort to access such support than others.

Careers Fairs, Apprenticeship or FE/HE Fairs

A number of participants across ethnicity segments referred to careers fair-type events in their schools. The success or impact of these events on individuals appeared to be largely dependent on the subject or career areas or options provided, with some participants able to find and benefit from information around subjects or pathways they were already interested in, while others found little benefit from such events (and suggested that these can be seen as a "mess around" or "waste of time" for some students).

Guest Speakers and Presentations

Similar to the above, but on a smaller and more specific scale, participants referred to guest speakers and presenters from different providers and career sectors coming into schools, again with mixed success. There were some examples where participants had benefited from information about areas they were interested in, while others described events that were "boring", not relevant or even put participants off subjects that they were previously interested in.

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

> *In my secondary school there were a few visits from different universities to explain to us why we should go to university and opportunities we can get from there. It was debatable how good it was. I feel like I didn't really listen in any of them. I feel like if it wasn't just a presentation in assembly it would have caught more people's attention. But with it being boring, it wasn't really appealing to secondary school students.*
>
> *South Asian FE participant*

> *I've had trips to university to look around and see how things work in university. I've gone to Leeds for the science and medicine trips. They've been really helpful. They help me make decisions about which way I want to go after A-levels. And they've given me an insight on everything.*
>
> *Polish FE participant*

> *There's been people that have come in and spoken about their jobs. There was a club – only selected people are allowed in it – and they visited a university. I would have liked to go but they only let the selected few be allowed to go, which was unfortunate. But I wish we did do more trips to universities.*
>
> *Mixed Heritage FE participant*

> *Unifrog is actually quite useful. You can see what you need to study at A-levels, and you can see what the grade boundaries are and stuff like that.*
>
> *Mixed Heritage KS4 participant*

HE Campus Visits

By far the most consistently positive-impacting support or activity described by participants was visits to HE campuses. These were described as having helped participants gain an insight into university life, to help with their choice of university and or course and to have helped them feel more confident and / or comfortable about going to university. A number of participants suggested they would like more of these and earlier in their education.

Digital Tools

There were a few mentions of digital tools like Unifrog that participants have used via their schools to help with choosing and planning their future pathways. These were described as useful by all those who had used them.

Diversity of Support and Content

One consistent theme or request from participants regarding the support and activities provided to help with their progression was the need for diversity – both in terms of content and the presenters/providers. Many participants, across ethnicity segments, pointed to a lack of variety among the subject and careers content presented at careers events or by guest speakers, with a focus on "conventional" subjects or careers that might not appeal to students and a lack of "modern" or "creative" subjects. Participants (particularly Black Caribbean and Mixed Heritage) also pointed to a lack of representation from people of their ethnicity among guest speakers at their schools and suggested that this was something that they really wanted to see; role models who they could relate to, who understood their difficulties and could encourage them that they could succeed. We will discuss these themes again later, starting at page 84.

Please note that any differences described between ethnicities are indicative based on our qualitative discussions with a relatively small sample of learners and are not intended to be a quantifiable or absolute comparison.

COVID-19 Impacts

One recent factor that has undoubtedly affected the educational experience and support needed, for school and college learners from all backgrounds across the UK, is the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic and associated impacts such as; lockdowns, school closures, isolation and social distancing. Having originally planned to conduct qualitative fieldwork for this research in spring 2020, the project was postponed due to lockdowns and associated impacts, with the first phase of learner discussion groups and interviews taking place between November and December 2020. This gave us the opportunity to ask learners about their experiences and impacts on their education of the first national UK lockdown (March-July 2020), the second lockdown (November 2020) and the time in between. Subsequently, follow-up interviews with 11 learners from January-February 2021 enabled us to ask some of these learners about their experience of the third lockdown (from January 2021 and continuing to the time of writing), and how their experience of school closures, virtual learning and associated impacts had changed, if at all, over the past year.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on BAME learners (among others) and their experiences in education over the last year, with virtual learning consistently seen as inferior to normal in-person schooling. During the research, participants were experiencing increased workloads and pressure as they sought to catch up and maintain performance throughout their (potentially grade-deciding) ongoing assessments. While most retained similar intentions to progress to university, many were concerned about their preparations for this next and most challenging step, as well as the impacts of the continuing COVID-19 situation around their student (social) experience and living arrangements.

While BAME learners we spoke to did not express any specific or additional concerns around COVID-19 (that wouldn't affect other students), it is fair to assume that any challenges that BAME learners experience in education generally are unlikely to have improved over the past year and that any "gaps" between BAME learners and the rest of the population are unlikely to have decreased and may well increase as a result of these impacts.

The impacts of COVID-19 upon BAME and other learners and explored in more detail in an additional report completed by Cosmos on behalf of GHWY.

Follow-up Interviews

Having originally planned to conduct qualitative fieldwork for this research in spring 2020, our initial plan was to conduct a first and second phase of interviews several months apart, to see how participants had progressed in this time and how their experiences or thoughts around the topics in question might have changed. Due to the project being postponed, due to COVID-19 and associated impacts, the first phase of learner discussion groups and interviews took place between November and December 2020. There was only a month or two before follow-up interviews in January-February 2021, to meet later project deadlines, meaning a reduced time period in which any significant changes for participants were likely to occur. However, this did give us the opportunity to ask participants about the impacts of the second and third national lockdowns and how their experience of more recent school closures, virtual learning and associated impacts compared to their earlier experiences. **30-minute follow-up interviews were completed with 11 FE learners** who had previously taken part in the first phase of discussions. We opted to focus our follow-up interview phase on FE learners as these were typically more engaged with the research and more likely to have experienced significant progression, for example in relation to their university plans.

We also asked participants about any further experiences in relation to race, ethnicity or changes in perspectives around these topics, as discussed in the first phase, however there was little to report in this regard due to the shorter time between phases than originally planned and the amount of time that participants had spent out of school; with fewer racial incidents to report for example.

However, participants did describe a number of other developments regarding their academic and future progress; with several having applied for, received offers from and / or made progress in terms of deciding their preferred universities. Two participants had changed the subjects they were planning on studying at university, while one learner had moved to a new college and course.

Participants generally described continuing challenges and frustrations around learning from home. Around half the participants suggested that virtual learning during the most recent school closure had improved since the previous lockdown, however some of these were comparing between different institutions (from Year 11 to Year 12). Participants were generally satisfied with their academic progress and had learned to cope with the virtual learning situation, but would generally prefer to be in school. Only one learner suggested they were finding things more difficult now, however this was largely due to the increased workload from Year 11 to sixth-form. One learner described how a WhatsApp group among fellow students had been a useful source of academic and social support.

Around half of participants described their future plans being affected in some way by the continuing COVID-19 situation; though they were still mostly keen on university, some were concerned that their experience might not be what they had hoped previously. Two participants were now planning on staying home while studying at university, while two were now also considering apprenticeships as an alternative option. One learner had decided to defer their entry to university by a year.

Evidence of progression support within colleges remained fairly limited, with the exception of one Polish learner in Year 12 – who had received significant helpful support via a "Higher Education course" and a Go Higher staff member in their college – who had made significant progress with identifying potential universities to apply to as a result. However, interestingly, two participants had described benefiting from "Widening Participation" or "Access" programmes at specific universities that had helped them to feel more prepared for university, while another had been attracted to a university because of a "Flying Start" programme that they offered (quotes from these learners are included on the following page).

I'm thinking of going to Leeds University, just because I've been there to have a look at the dentistry facilities as I get to experience some stuff as part of the widening participation scheme. So because I've had that first hand experience and I quite liked the union when I was there. So I think really Leeds is probably my first choice. The widening participation scheme was called 'Reach for Excellence'. You could basically join on to whichever things you wanted to do. I wanted to do dentistry and work with the tutors and the people that were in that department. But even if people wanted to do geography or something completely different they would facilitate for whatever subjects that people would want to do. I would say I learned more about what makes that university different from the others, because I was able to experience and get an impression about exactly how a dental student would learn at university. I think it made me more inclined to go because I was able to experience it rather than others who are a bit further away. But obviously because of the lockdowns I wasn't really able to see any of the universities in person and so I think that's why I'd be more inclined to go to Leeds.

South Asian FE participant

I've just been looking into university stuff and joining their access programs. I think Sheffield's doing it, I actually had a meeting with them yesterday. Obviously we would go into the actual uni if it wasn't locked down, so it was on the call and there was about one hundred students there. And they're just telling us how it's going to go, what events they've got planned, summer schools or little residential trips and just helping us with applications and stuff. Obviously medicine and dentistry are quite hard to get in to and so they're just trying to help with the competition. It was really helpful the way they explained it and broke it all down, because there's not just A level exams that we need to do. There's additional exams like UKAR or a BEMA, it depends on the uni. So they're just giving us a lot of help. And if we stay on that course and show certain attributes they'll give us a university offer with a lower grade. I feel like that's what everyone is hoping for.

South Asian FE participant

One of the reasons why I want to go to Nottingham is because they take this special program, which would be really helpful for me. They've got a flying start program which really helps with providing experience and the education part, which I think is really good. It starts when I arrive at the university.

Black African FE participant

Learner-Parent Interviews

Following our first phase of discussions with learners, learners were asked to complete a 'learner-parent interview' in which learners themselves would interview one or both parents around the research topics, reading from and submitting responses via an online survey/script provided by Cosmos.

Previous studies conducted by Cosmos have demonstrated that parental influence is a key factor for BAME learners in education. For this reason, it was imperative to capture parent responses, as well as learner reception of their parents' views, as part of this evaluation.

A learner-led interview methodology was developed as an effective means to gain access to and collect feedback from parents, with learners who were already engaged with the project (having already taken part in their own interviews/discussion groups) effectively serving as gatekeepers between Cosmos and parents.

Learners and parents would each receive a £10 gift voucher as a reward to complete the learner-parent interview. Of our 37 learners involved in the first discussion phase, 18 went on to complete the learner-parent interview task. While this sample size is too small to make robust quantitative statements or comparisons between different ethnicities, it is certainly large enough to facilitate qualitative evaluation and quantitative indicators of views among the BAME parent sample as a whole.

18 learners interviewed 21 parents (15 learners interviewing one parent and 3 interviewing two parents). Our total parent sample included:
- 7 South Asian parents of South Asian learners
- 2 South Asian parents of Mixed Heritage learners
- 5 Black African parents of Black African learners
- 1 Black African parent of Mixed Heritage learner
- 5 Black Caribbean parents of Black Caribbean learners
- 1 Polish parent of Polish learner

Learners asked where their parents and grandparents were born.
8 of our learners were 'first generation' born in the UK; 3 were 'second generation' (at least one parent born in the UK) while 7 were 'third generation' or more (at least one grandparent born in the UK).

Employment

15 (71%) of parents were employed, 3 self-employed and 3 unemployed. Only one student listed both parents as being unemployed. Many parents were in professional occupations such as accountancy, banking, education, healthcare and law.

Only 2 parents said they would like their child to "work in a similar profession" – both Black African parents in healthcare – but didn't express this wish for their child forcefully. 8 wanted them to "do something different" and 10 said "I don't mind". Most of those who wanted their child to "do something different" said so because of concerns/criticism around their own profession, while a few suggested they "wanted something better" for their child.

The majority of parents suggested they would want their child to pursue a career that was right for them and that they would enjoy and support them in their choice.

"I would like you to work in the profession that you love and best suits your strengths."
Black African parent of Black African participant

"If you have any interest you wish to pursue then I will support you because it's what you want."
South Asian parent of South Asian participant

"I want you to be happy. It's your life and your choice what career you choose."
Black Caribbean parent of Black Caribbean participant

Parents' University Experience

11 (61%) of our 18 learners who completed the learner-parent interview had at least one parent who had been to university. Parents' experiences in HE may be a contributing factor to learners' future intentions (p51), perceived value of education (p29) and parental influence (p48), as discussed in our learner interviews and discussion groups.

Parents' experiences at university were overwhelmingly described as positive, with only a couple of mentions of "hard work" as a downside. Almost all parents described university as "fun" or "enjoyable" and referred to "social" and "personal" benefits beyond the educational aspects.

"University was a good experience, I would want every child to go through that stage of life. It is worthwhile if you study what you enjoy and also a course that will give you lots of opportunities."
Black African parent of Black African participant

"Yes it was worthwhile, highly enjoyable. Not just from an education point of view but it also helped me socially and emotionally. It also helped me secure my job."
South Asian parent of Mixed Heritage participant

"It was worthwhile, that's why I'm still working in the education sector. It gives you the opportunity to meet different people of different ethnic backgrounds."
Black African parent of Black African participant

"It was really hard work because I had to write a lot of essays but it was fun and I enjoyed meeting different people."
Black African parent of Black African participant

GO HIGHER
West Yorkshire

OfS Uni Connect
Programme

COSMOS
ENGAGEMENT

Parents' Hopes for Learners

When asked if they would like their child to go to university, parents of 11 (61%) learners said "I really want you to go to university", 6 (33%) said "I would like it if you went to university" and 1 (6%) said "I don't mind". No parents said "I don't want you to go to university".

Improved "career or "job opportunities" were by far the most common reason why parents want their children to go to university, followed by "life experience" and "education".

> "To get a good career and job that is rewarding and because professional careers require university degrees"
> *South Asian parent of South Asian participant*

> "For future job prospects and to help your emotional and social development."
> *South Asian parent of Mixed Heritage participant*

> "I would like you to go to University because I would you to challenge yourself and your thinking."
> *Black African parent of Black African participant*

> "Education is extremely important, it moulds you into who you are and opens your mind."
> *South Asian parent of South Asian participant*

Would you like me to go to university?

- I really want you to go to university
- I would like it if you went to university
- I don't mind / mixed
- I don't want you to go to university

6%

33%

61%
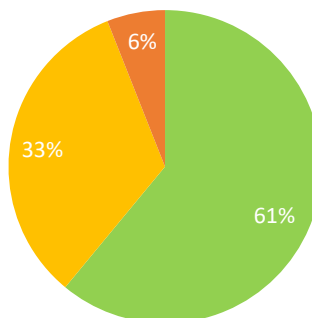
University Prospects

Parents of 15 (83%) students said "Yes, definitely" that their child "could go to university if I wanted to", 1 (6%) said "I think so/maybe", 2 (11%) said "you would have to work very hard".

Parents of 17 (94%) students said "Yes, definitely" that their child "could do well at university", 1 (6%) said "you would have to work very hard".

Parents were typically positive and encouraging about their child's academic ability, work ethic and potential to succeed; the few less optimistic comments related to students who might genuinely not have been so academically capable.

> "You are smart and intelligent. You have a lot of potential."
> Black African parent of Black African participant

> "You are very academic, focused and organised."
> Black Caribbean parent of Black Caribbean participant

> "You are very determined; once you put your mind to something you achieve it."
> Black African parent of Black African participant

Do you think I could go to university if I wanted to?

- 83%
- 11%
- 6%
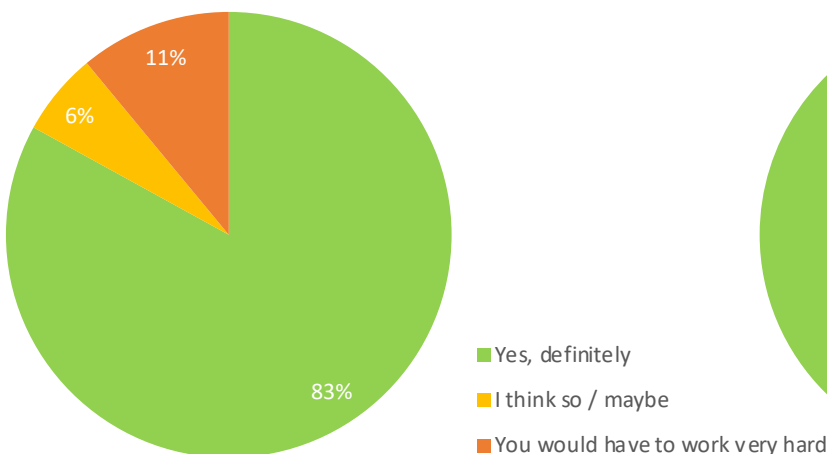
Do you think that I could do well at university?

- 94%
- 6%

Legend:
- Yes, definitely
- I think so / maybe
- You would have to work very hard
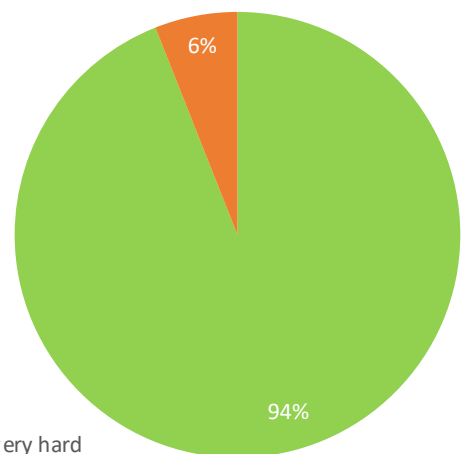
Challenges for BAME people in Education and Working Life

78% of parents said that "education in the UK is more challenging for children of my ethnic background than it is for others". This combined figure ("Yes, it is a lot harder" *plus* "Yes, it is a little bit harder") was the same for "university life", albeit with an increase in those who said "it is a lot harder". The combined figure increased to 89% for "working life is more challenging for people of my ethnic background than it is to others".

Fewer "opportunities" and a need to "work harder" were among the most common themes across all three questions. Structural racism and a lack of diversity were cited as challenges in education and university life, while "cultural differences" and challenges "fitting in" were mentioned for university only. M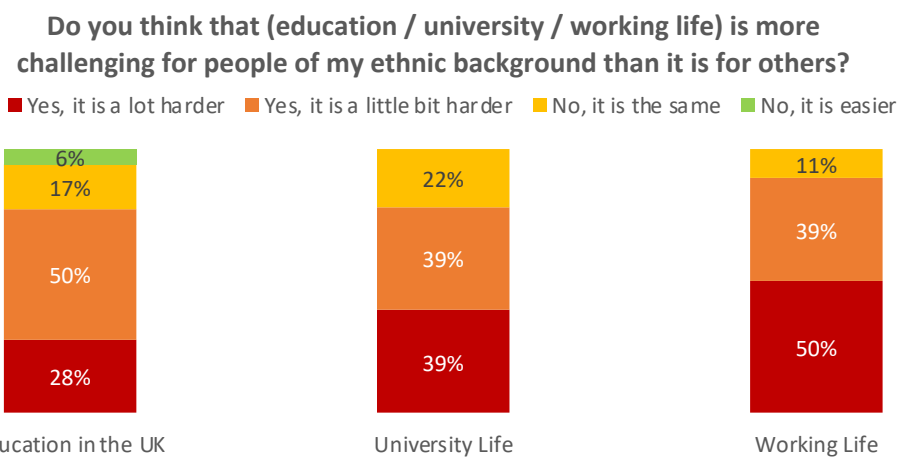ore overt "discrimination" was the most common challenge in working life, while this was not explicitly mentioned in relation to education or university.

Do you think that (education / university / working life) is more challenging for people of my ethnic background than it is for others?

■ Yes, it is a lot harder   ■ Yes, it is a little bit harder   ■ No, it is the same   ■ No, it is easier

	Education in the UK	University Life	Working Life
No, it is easier	6%		
No, it is the same	17%	22%	11%
Yes, it is a little bit harder	50%	39%	39%
Yes, it is a lot harder	28%	39%	50%

This apparent trend toward later life stages being 'more challenging' for people from BAME backgrounds poses a number of questions or possible explanations.

- Do the challenges for people from BAME backgrounds become worse as they progress through education into working life, or become more obvious?
- Are the challenges for people from BAME backgrounds being successfully reduced in education, particularly pre-HE, at a quicker rate than working life?
- Or does this show a generational trend; that education may be becoming less challenging for BAME learners today, while their parents have lived through greater challenges in their working life, as part of broader social trends?

While we are unable to answer these questions from our primary research, earlier sources suggest that "the BAME Attainment Gap does not exist in isolation within Higher Education but is part of the wider structural nature of racial inequality in the UK"[1] and that there are "racial injustices in all areas of public life: health, education, employment, housing and the criminal justice system"[2].

Sources:
1. National Union of Students, 2019. Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK universities: #Closingthegap, pg. 5
2. Cabinet Office (2017) Race Disparity Audit Summary Findings from the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website. London: Cabinet Office. IN: National Union of Students, 2019. Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK universities: #Closingthegap.

> *We are in a minority so therefore we don't get the same chances the majority of people do because they see us as different; this just means we have to work a little bit harder to show we are the same or better in studies than others.*
> *South Asian parent of South Asian participant*

> *It's (education) harder because of structural and institutional racism such as white privilege as well as rigidity and lack of diversity in the curriculum.*
> *South Asian parent of Mixed Heritage participant*

> *(University life is harder) Because of cultural differences in relation to social aspects such as drinking and partying.*
> *South Asian parent of Mixed Heritage participant*

> *People from minority groups are underrepresented in university as compared to their counterparts.*
> *South Asian parent of South Asian participant*

> *Some employers will also see you as 'less than'. You may have more qualifications than a non-black employee but you will be paid the same. As Black people we have to work twice as hard just to be 'equal'.*
> *Black African parent of Black African participant*

> *It's (working life) harder because of a lack of equal opportunity for employment. There are higher figures of unemployment for people from out ethnic backgrounds. There's structural racism and a negative perception of people from our backgrounds as well as cultural prejudice.*
> *South Asian parent of Mixed Heritage participant*

Support Needed for BAME Learners

Learners asked parents "What kind of support do you think is needed from education providers or authorities to help young people from my ethnic background be successful?" The most common themes were diversity / representation among teachers, speakers and mentors, education around race and cultural differences and equal opportunities. Academic support as well as support with finances and travel were each also mentioned a couple of times.

> *Have more ethnic minority people in higher positions coming in to talk so they can see that any job is achievable no matter your colour.*
> *Black Caribbean parent of Black Caribbean participant*

> *To give opportunity for successful BAME tutors to give them advice on how to overcome challenges given to them because of their skin colour.*
> *Black African parent of Black African participant*

> *Increase awareness of staff and non BAME students of cultural differences. Reassure that we would be treated equally and have confidence that we would be given the same opportunities as other children/young people. If difficulties are encountered then there are robust procedures in place to deal with this.*
> *South Asian parent of Mixed Heritage participant*

> *I think if everyone has the fair opportunities and equal opportunities at the same time for the same things then no extra requirements are needed but when people feel that they have to strive more to get more or to get equal that's the disparity that shouldn't be there*
> *South Asian parent of South Asian participant*

> *I think more bursaries should be given to ethnic minority kids who haven't got working parents that went to university. I also think they should have travel bursaries since getting to school is a hassle.*
> *South Asian parent of South Asian participant*

Parents' Advice to their Children

Learners asked their parents "What is the most important advice you would give, to help me be successful in life?" The most common themes were around hard work / focus, self-belief / resilience (including resilience in the face of discrimination) and to "follow what makes you happy".

> *Work as hard as you can and use any setbacks as learning opportunities. Do something that you genuinely enjoy and have a passion for.*
> *South Asian parent of South Asian participant*

> *To never give up even if certain people treat you differently, always prove them wrong.*
> *South Asian parent of South Asian participant*

At the end of the survey, we asked learners whether they had heard the comments made by their parents before. 13 learners said "I have heard it all before" while 5 said "I have heard most of it before", suggesting that parents' survey responses were authentic and in line with their real-life conversations with their children.

Key Findings from our Learner-Parent Interviews

- Parents were generally keen for their children to go to university and optimistic about their chances to go to university and do well there
- Parents' own university experiences were generally positive, valued and promoted by parents, for career as well as personal benefits
- Parents tended to express support for whatever path would make their children happy. Very few of the parents interviewed want their children to "work in a similar profession"
- At least three quarters of parents believed that "education is more challenging for children from my ethnic background" with this figure increasing to almost 9/10 for "working life is more challenging"; fewer "opportunities" and a need to "work harder" are consistent themes
- Diversity / representation among teachers, speakers and mentors was the most common theme regarding support or action that may be needed, correlating with our findings from our learner discussions

Recommendations

Recommendations
Support & Action Required

Throughout our primary research with learners and their parents, a number of challenges for BAME learners in education and progression were raised, as discussed throughout this report so far. What follows is a summary of the common and key challenges raised and some suggested solutions; derived from a combination of our conversations with the participants themselves as well as Cosmos' own suggestions as to how some challenges may be addressed. This is based on our understanding of BAME learners from our primary research as well as broader work in the education and Widening Participation sectors.

The support needs described can be broadly put into two categories: General Progression Support that is likely to be needed in some form by all learners regardless of their ethnicity, but may be more commonly relevant to some ethnicities than others and Race-Related Support, dealing with specific challenges for BAME learners or specific BAME ethnicities, that are unlikely to be required by White learners. A number of more specific types of support fall under each of these three categories or headings, which are described over the following pages.

Note that our recommendations do not imply that efforts to address these support needs are not already under way; indeed most if not all of these points are likely to already be targeted to varying degrees of focus and success. Similarly, our recommendations do not necessarily specify who may be responsible for addressing these needs (whether that be schools, authorities, Uni Connect partnerships like Go Higher West Yorkshire, or any combination of these). Our recommendations simply highlight the most important needs for BAME learners as identified through our research and suggest that these be in central focus.

General Progression Support
- HE Campus Visits
- Support with HE Applications & Personal Statements
- Financial Support & Information
- Accommodation & Living Arrangements
- Careers Support
- Life Skills & Guidance
- Diversity of Content, Subjects & Pathways

Race-Related Support
- Diversity among Teachers, Staff & Guests
- Diversity of Curriculum
- Support & Processes for dealing with Racism
- Support with Language
- Supporting & Engaging Parents
- Racial and Cultural Education – for Students & Staff

General Progression Support

This section describes support with progression that is likely to be needed in some form by all learners regardless of their ethnicity, but may be more commonly relevant to some ethnicities than others, as described. This includes and or relates to much of the support that is already provided or facilitated by Go Higher West Yorkshire.

HE Campus Visits

By far the most consistently positive-impacting support or activity described by participants in their experience so far was visits to university. These were described as having helped learners gain an insight into university life, to help with their choice of university and / or course and to have helped them feel more confident and / or comfortable about going to university. A number of participants suggested they would like more of these and earlier in their education. This is something that has been notably lacking for many learners during the past year of COVID-19 and would be of significant benefit to learners when possible. Virtual open days and digital interaction with HEPs could be promoted in the meantime; though it is questionable as to whether these would have the same impact as physical campus visits, these could also provide learners some opportunity to get a feel for HEPs and to interact with staff and students and would certainly be better than no such interaction.

Support with HE Applications & Personal Statements

When learners do decide that they want to go to HE, a crucial step in their journey that can often be a cause of stress and confusion is the application process and writing of personal statements. Learners can benefit from general application advice and instructions presented to them as a group but also often need one-to-one support to help them through what is inevitably a varied individual process. Black African learners that we spoke to, in particular, expressed a need for support in this area – this ethnicity segment generally having strong intentions to go to university, often from a young age; they would like to know more about what specific HEPs want and how to make their applications and personal statements stand out and help them to succeed.

Financial Support & Information

One of the key concerns for many learners considering Higher Education, regardless of ethnicity, is the financial challenges of HE. This can be a common barrier for many learners from underrepresented (e.g. Uni Connect) locations and backgrounds, where finances are often an area for concern in daily life and the prospect of accumulating thousands of pounds of debt through HE can be daunting. Concern around finances was most commonly mentioned by South Asian learners we spoke to, also evidenced by their comparatively low score on the CFE survey metric; knowledge of 'the financial support available'.

Concern about the value for money of Higher Education is also likely to have increased for many in the wake of COVID-19, as learners question whether the quality of potential virtual learning will be as high as traditional face-to-face learning, while the benefits of student life and the university experience may also be negatively impacted. Learners would benefit from thorough information and re-assurance about the affordability of Higher Education, how student finance and loans work and the return on investment that HE degrees and improved employment opportunities provide.

Accommodation and Living Arrangements

Another key area of university life that learners may have questions around, that have increased in the wake of COVID-19, is accommodation and living arrangements. BAME learners, and particularly South Asian learners we spoke to, may be more inclined to stay at home whilst studying, or to study at a university close to home, than White learners. CFE survey data also shows that BAME learners express lower knowledge of 'the options of where to live whilst studying'. Questions around this topic are likely to have increased in the wake of COVID-19, as learners and their families are understandably concerned about the risk of infection in university accommodation; the financial risk in the event of future lockdowns and the reduced quality of student social opportunities. Learners would benefit from thorough information and options around accommodation and living arrangements, whether closer to home or further afield, to help alleviate any concerns; to ensure that these concerns do not prevent progression to and through Higher Education, and that learners make the choices that are best for them.

Careers Support

Another aspect of support that may overlap with, but is not necessarily specific to Higher Education progression is around careers. Learners have a range of needs in relation to careers support, that vary according to the individual; from the presentation of different career options to help identify potentially suitable careers, to specific guidance around careers already identified as being of interest. As with other areas of support, this may be required at both a group level as well as more individual support. Learners who have a particular career in mind – who know how to progress toward that career and know how HE qualifications can benefit them in their future careers – tend to be more inclined toward Higher Education; increasing motivation and confidence around their progression and pathways. Black African learners that we spoke to, in particular, expressed a need for more specific careers advice – this segment generally having strong intentions to go to HE, often from a young age; they would like to know more about specific career pathways.

Life Skills & Guidance

Related to the above, learners that we spoke to expressed a need for more guidance and training with specific employment and "life skills" such as CV writing, applying for jobs and support with work experience – for their own employment benefits as well as to help them gain experience that will help to make their HE applications stand out. From our conversations with learners, this appears to be an area that is not so frequently covered within existing support provision. Again learners could benefit from general guidance at a group level as well as individual support where needed.

Participants suggested that even where progression support is available it is not always obvious, attractive or accessible. From our other research and work in the education sector, Cosmos understand that learners are not necessarily always keen to access or use careers advice or guidance and often need encouragement, persistence and rapport with staff in these areas to do so. These barriers are likely to be greater for BAME learners and particularly Black African, Black Caribbean and Mixed Heritage learners, who may have negative experiences with White staff members and be more inclined to seek advice around these topics at home, and so these learners might need even greater encouragement and effort to access such support than others.

Diversity of Content, Subjects & Pathways

One consistent theme or request from participants regarding the support and activities provided to help with their progression was the need for diversity – both in terms of content and the presenters/providers. Many participants, across ethnicity segments, pointed to a lack of variety among the subject and careers content presented at careers events or by guest speakers, with a focus on "conventional" subjects or careers that might not appeal to students and a lack of "modern" or "creative" subjects. This could mean that many learners are not presented with options that are suitable to their talents or interests, that could make it difficult for them to identify a suitable subject to pursue; potentially impacting on their motivation or likelihood to progress to and through Higher Education. It could mean that those who do decide to pursue less conventional subjects don't get the same level of information and support as those that pursue more conventional subjects, which may lead to a lack of preparation or confidence when it comes to university. Or it could mean that learners are more likely to decide to pursue conventional subjects or routes that might not be best suited to them, which may lead to academic and motivational challenges later down the line. This latter challenge may be a particular risk for South Asian learners, who often reported experiencing significant parental and cultural pressure to pursue "respectable" careers.

When it comes to showing learners the subjects, careers and pathways that are available to them, it seems that the more variety that can be offered the better. The more options learners are presented with, even if most of these turn out not to be of interest, the more likely that learners are to find a pathway that is suitable to them. Learners would benefit from being exposed to a range of subjects and pathways, including apprenticeships as well as university, informed about the benefits of different pathways – including the links between less "conventional" subjects and future careers, and encouraged and supported to pursue the pathways that are right for them.

Race-Related Support

This section relates to dealing with specific challenges for BAME learners or specific BAME ethnicities within education settings, needed in addition to the general progression support described in the previous section.

Diversity among Teachers, Staff & Guests

One of the most common challenges described by BAME learners in their education is the lack of teaching and support staff of minority ethnic backgrounds within their schools and colleges. Many learners we spoke to attended schools with few or sometimes no staff of their ethnicity and felt that they lacked relatable staff that they could identify with and turn to for support. This is a challenge that many participants anticipated continuing in to Higher Education and the lack of BAME staff at HEPs has been reported as a factor in literature around the BAME Awarding Gap. HESA data suggests that only 17% of academic staff in HE in 2018/19 were from BAME backgrounds[1].Those learners who did have staff of similar backgrounds within their school or college often valued and turned to those individuals for support.

While there may be a number of structural and societal factors for the lack of BAME staff in education that may yet take many years to overturn, that go beyond the scope of this research, it is at the very least worth highlighting this issue to all schools and colleges; to encourage them to recruit BAME staff where possible and to facilitate existing BAME staff to support learners from similar backgrounds and / or to involve and represent positive role models for BAME learners from outside the school or college, as described below.

As well as a lack of diversity among school and college staff, and related to the previous section around diversity of content presented in relation to higher education and career progression, BAME learners we spoke to (particularly Black Caribbean and Mixed Heritage) also referred to the issue of diversity among guest speakers presenting such content. Specifically, they pointed to a lack of representation from people of their ethnicity among guest speakers at their schools and suggested that this was something that they really wanted to see; role models who they could relate to, who understood their difficulties and could encourage them that they could succeed.

Source:
1. https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/23-01-2020/sb256-higher-education-staff-statistics

Diversity of Curriculum

Following the previous sections on diversity of progression options and diversity of staff and role models, is diversity of curriculum. Many of the learners we spoke to referred to a lack of diversity in the curriculum, including a lack of history, perspectives and literature from different cultures, with some describing this pointedly as a "white curriculum". Participants described how they felt a lack of appreciation in schools for their history or culture, contributing to their feeling underrepresented or isolated, with some suggestion that this may be a symptom or a cause of continuing institutional racism. Efforts are recommended towards more considered, consistent and positive representations of different ethnicities and cultures within educational content. This links closely to the need for 'racial and cultural education' described on page 88.

Support & Processes for Dealing with Racism

As well as indicators of institutional racism as described above, BAME learners – particularly Black Caribbean, Black African and Mixed Heritage learners – often find themselves as victims of more specifically targeted racism. Forms of racism described by BAME learners range from hair-touching, to expressions of negative ethnic or cultural stereotypes to explicit racial slurs and name-calling, as well as a number of other forms as listed on page 38. While such behaviours by students are concerning in themselves, what is perhaps more concerning is how often learners described staff turning a blind eye to such incidents or even being guilty of such behaviours themselves. This can often leave BAME learners wondering how to deal with such problems and resigned to these being "normal" and something that they must learn to live with, with a significant long term impact on their sense of comfort and safety in the educational environment.

Learners expressed the need for more robust systems to report and address incidents of racism in schools, to ensure that culprits are appropriately disciplined but also educated to help prevent re-occurrence, and that victims (or potential victims) are given support and guidance as to how to deal with such incidents, both practically and emotionally, if and when they occur. Such systems and support are recommended as a key priority to ensure that learners' safety is protected and to turn the tide of racism by holding individual culprits, as well as their institutions, accountable.

Support with Language

One area where BAME learners – or specifically those who move to the UK from elsewhere – may struggle and require additional support is in relation to language. Inevitably, those who move to the UK and learn English as a second language will experience a period of learning and adaptation and any gap in language abilities will also likely impact on their ability to learn across subjects. This can also lead to difficulties settling into school, or worse – bullying, which could affect confidence throughout education. This can also be a barrier to Higher Education, where learners recognise that the academic language may be difficult. Schools should ideally look to provide as much support as possible with non-native English speakers learning the language as fundamental to various other aspects of their education and wellbeing.

Supporting & Engaging Parents

Related to the above, language is not only a challenge for many learners but also, and often more significantly so, for their parents. However, it is not only the English language that many BAME parents have difficulties with, but also their understanding of the UK education system and pathways – which are often quite different from those of their native country. This was particularly raised by Polish learners we spoke to. Learners are often challenged with not only translating the actual language used in discussions around their education but also explaining the options available to them that they may be considering. This could lead to confusion, disengagement or mixed messages from school and home towards learners and their decision making.

Our research shows that parental influence is often significant, valued and mostly positive, in BAME learners' decisions around their future. However, in order to facilitate effective support from home, it is recommended that schools and colleges seek to engage with and ensure that parents themselves are suitably informed about the options available to their children, perhaps via targeted communications or engagement activities that explain the UK education system, its potential pathways and their benefits. It is recommended that parents are also informed about the benefits of less "conventional" subjects and pathways and ideally encouraged to support their children in those choices should they choose to pursue them, to ensure that learners are able to make the decisions that are truly best for them.

Racial and Cultural Education – for Students & Staff

We conclude this section with perhaps one of the most important – and certainly one of the most frequently mentioned – forms of support requested by BAME learners to help improve the experiences in school and college; that is racial and cultural education for students and staff. This was one of the most common themes described by learners (alongside diversity of staff, curriculum and content) when asked what could be done to better support learners from their background in education. BAME learners we spoke to recognised that their fellow students could be ignorant or even overtly racist at times simply as a factor or their immaturity and lack of awareness, but expressed that conversations or training were essential to educate young people about the significance and potential harms of racism and discrimination, for them to consider and appreciate different cultural perspectives and to overcome negative racial and cultural stereotypes.

As well as combatting overt racism, training should also aim to educate people about and in turn reduce microaggressions; i.e. subtle differences in treatment by people who may not be aware that they are behaving in a racist or discriminatory way but nonetheless have a significant negative impact on the recipient and reveal a lack of racial awareness or sensitivity. participants describe teachers, as well as well as students, as being frequent culprits of such behaviours.

While a few learners we spoke to described their schools as positive examples where there was a culture of understanding and acceptance towards people of different ethnicities and backgrounds, with the aid of regular conversations about such topics, many more learners described attempts at racial and cultural education such as content around Black History Month or responses to Black Lives Matter as being inconsistent, insufficient and often insincere. Learners also suggested that schools and staff might be reluctant to discuss such topics out of discomfort or to avoid causing offence, but that this only contributes to continued ignorance and negativity. In order to truly overcome any negative beliefs students or staff might hold about people of any ethnicity or cultural background, to reduce and protect learners from racism and discrimination and create a real environment of equality and acceptance; schools and colleges should seek to deliver consistent, genuine and open conversations and education about race and related topics, drawing on the perspectives of those who are affected by them.

Appendix

HESA Student Data

The following section includes data supporting the insights described in the HESA Student Data section (p17-18) of the report.

Data referred to in commentary on page 17:

Students by level of study

Academic years 2000/01 to 2019/20
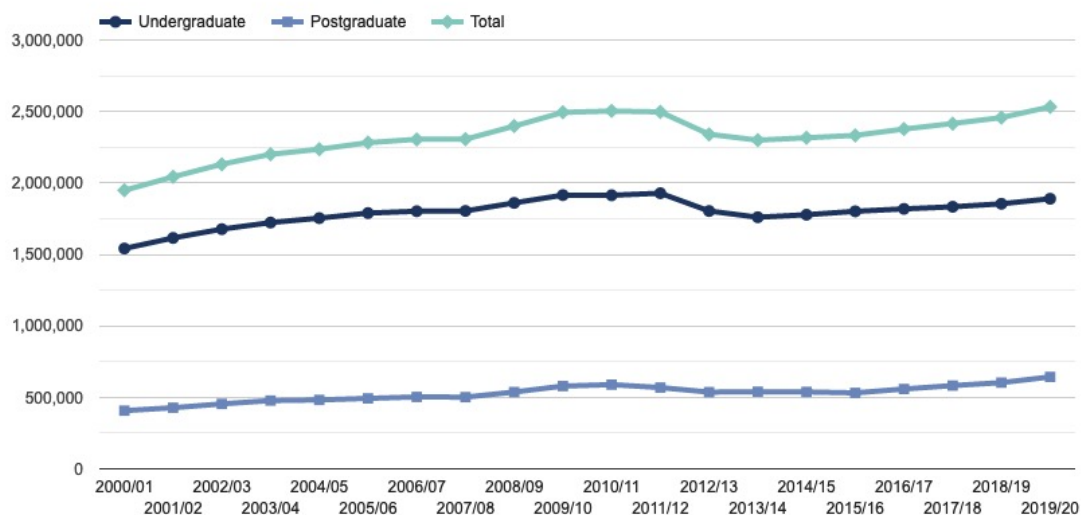
HE student enrolments by personal characteristics

Academic years 2015/16 to 2019/20

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Ethnicity					
White	77%	77%	76%	75%	74%
Black	7%	8%	8%	8%	8%
Asian	10%	11%	11%	11%	12%
Mixed	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Other	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%

Source: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he

Data referred to in commentary on page 17:

Proportion of ethnicities among students enrolled in UK HEPs, 2019/20

	White	Black	Asian	Mixed	Other	Not known	Total
Total UK	**73%**	**8%**	**11%**	**4%**	**2%**	**2%**	**1,975,380**
East Midlands	70%	10%	12%	5%	1%	2%	149,360
East of England	63%	15%	13%	5%	2%	2%	106,930
London	48%	16%	22%	6%	5%	2%	282,065
North East	85%	4%	6%	3%	1%	1%	85,520
North West	77%	5%	11%	4%	1%	1%	197,210
Northern Ireland	93%	1%	2%	1%	0%	3%	49,480
Scotland	88%	2%	5%	2%	1%	2%	198,865
South East	77%	7%	9%	4%	2%	2%	317,190
South West	85%	3%	5%	4%	1%	1%	141,835
Wales	86%	3%	6%	3%	1%	1%	114,360
West Midlands	59%	13%	20%	5%	2%	2%	172,350
Yorkshire & The Humber	**77%**	**4%**	**12%**	**4%**	**1%**	**1%**	**160,215**
The University of Bradford	32%	8%	54%	3%	3%	1%	8,165
The University of Huddersfield	64%	6%	24%	3%	2%	1%	14,025
The University of Hull	86%	5%	5%	3%	1%	1%	12,305
Kaplan Open Learning	65%	17%	8%	3%	5%	1%	1,315
Leeds Arts University	89%	2%	4%	4%	1%	1%	1,940
Leeds Beckett University	79%	4%	10%	4%	1%	1%	21,705
Leeds Conservatoire	89%	3%	1%	6%	1%	0%	1,170
The University of Leeds	79%	3%	10%	5%	1%	2%	25,570
Leeds Trinity University	67%	6%	22%	3%	1%	1%	4,895
Northern College of Acupuncture	87%	0%	3%	3%	0%	7%	150
Sheffield Hallam University	82%	5%	8%	4%	1%	1%	28,425
The University of Sheffield	80%	3%	9%	4%	2%	2%	18,960
York St John University	94%	1%	2%	2%	0%	0%	6,395
The University of York	84%	3%	6%	4%	1%	2%	15,200

Source: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/where-study/characteristics

Data referred to in commentary on page 18:

Percentage of HE student enrolments in science subjects by personal characteristics

Academic years 2019/20

	2019/20
Ethnicity	
White	46%
Black	45%
Asian	53%
Mixed	44%
Other	49%

Source: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/what-study

The science grouping is an aggregation of CAH level 1 codes CAH01 through to CAH13 with the exception of CAH12-01-13 (Human geography). CAH12 (Geographical and environmental studies) has been disaggregated so that CAH12-01-13 (Human geography) is presented in the non-science grouping labelled as 'Geographical and environmental studies (social sciences)'. All other CAH level 3 codes within CAH12 are presented in the science grouping labelled as 'Geographical and environmental studies (natural sciences)'. This grouping of science subjects has been created by HESA.

Subject	White	Black	Asian	Mixed	Other	Not known	Total %	Total
01-01-01 Medical sciences (non-specific)	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	3,335
01-01-02 Medicine (non-specific)	1.8%	1.6%	5.2%	2.8%	4.0%	2.3%	2.3%	45,455
01-01-03 Medicine by specialism	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	2,225
01-01-04 Dentistry	0.2%	0.2%	1.2%	0.3%	0.9%	0.4%	0.4%	7,235
02-01-01 Nursing (non-specific)	2.0%	2.0%	1.4%	0.8%	0.9%	3.4%	1.9%	37,060
02-01-02 Adult nursing	2.3%	5.5%	1.9%	1.5%	1.1%	1.1%	2.4%	47,875
02-01-03 Community nursing	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	3,180
02-01-04 Midwifery	0.6%	0.6%	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.5%	10,075
02-01-05 Children's nursing	0.5%	0.6%	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%	8,820
02-01-06 Dental nursing	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	410
02-01-07 Mental health nursing	0.6%	2.9%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	0.4%	0.7%	14,225
02-01-08 Learning disabilities nursing	0.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	1,755
02-01-09 Others in nursing	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	7,155
02-02-01 Pharmacology	0.2%	0.3%	0.5%	0.2%	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%	4,270
02-02-02 Toxicology	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	200
02-02-03 Pharmacy	0.5%	1.6%	3.4%	0.6%	3.3%	1.0%	1.0%	19,185
02-03-01 Health sciences (non-specific)	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	7,310
02-03-02 Nutrition and dietetics	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%	5,685
02-03-03 Ophthalmics	0.1%	0.1%	1.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	4,540
02-03-04 Environmental and public health	0.2%	0.8%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	4,380
02-03-05 Physiotherapy	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	8,305
02-03-06 Complementary and alternative medicine	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	4,045
02-03-07 Medical technology	0.3%	0.6%	0.7%	0.2%	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%	7,225
02-03-08 Counselling, psychotherapy and occupational therapy	1.0%	0.8%	0.5%	0.8%	0.5%	0.8%	0.9%	17,895
02-03-09 Healthcare science (non-specific)	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	3,570
02-03-10 Biomedical sciences (non specific)	0.8%	1.9%	2.9%	1.3%	2.6%	0.8%	1.2%	23,900
02-03-11 Anatomy, physiology and pathology	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	4,905
02-03-12 Others in subjects allied to medicine	1.1%	0.8%	1.1%	0.8%	0.7%	0.6%	1.1%	21,160
03-01-01 Biosciences (non-specific)	0.5%	0.4%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	0.4%	0.5%	10,580
03-01-02 Biology (non-specific)	0.7%	0.4%	0.5%	0.8%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%	12,540
03-01-03 Ecology and environmental biology	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	5,800
03-01-04 Microbiology and cell science	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	2,885
03-01-05 Plant sciences	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	240
03-01-06 Zoology	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	5,495
03-01-07 Genetics	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	1,985
03-01-08 Molecular biology, biophysics and biochemistry	0.5%	0.7%	0.9%	0.7%	0.9%	0.4%	0.5%	10,860
03-01-09 Hair and beauty sciences	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5
03-01-10 Others in biosciences	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	2,135
03-02-01 Sport and exercise sciences	2.6%	2.0%	0.8%	2.4%	1.1%	0.9%	2.3%	44,615
04-01-01 Psychology (non-specific)	4.5%	3.4%	3.5%	4.9%	3.8%	3.0%	4.3%	84,815
04-01-02 Applied psychology	0.5%	0.3%	0.3%	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%	0.5%	9,395
04-01-03 Developmental psychology	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	2,170
04-01-04 Psychology and health	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	5,795
04-01-05 Others in psychology	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	2,825
05-01-01 Veterinary medicine and dentistry	0.4%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.3%	6,730
05-01-02 Others in veterinary sciences	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	1,970
06-01-01 Animal science	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%	5,495
06-01-02 Agricultural sciences	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	155
06-01-03 Agriculture	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.3%	5,330
06-01-04 Rural estate management	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	340
06-01-05 Forestry and arboriculture	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	355
06-01-06 Food and beverage studies (non-specific)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	435
06-01-07 Food sciences	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	1,360
06-01-08 Food and beverage production	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	505
07-01-01 Physics	1.0%	0.2%	0.7%	1.1%	0.6%	1.2%	0.9%	18,275
07-01-02 Astronomy	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	2,410
07-02-01 Chemistry	0.9%	0.5%	1.2%	1.0%	0.8%	0.8%	0.9%	18,365
07-03-01 Physical sciences (non-specific)	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	1,680
07-03-02 Earth sciences	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	6,760
07-03-03 Materials science	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	1,005
07-03-04 Forensic and archaeological sciences	0.4%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.4%	7,220
08-01-01 Sciences (non-specific)	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	2,240
08-01-02 Natural sciences (non-specific)	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	3,500
09-01-01 Mathematics	1.5%	0.7%	2.0%	1.6%	1.4%	1.6%	1.5%	30,375
09-01-02 Operational research	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	450
09-01-03 Statistics	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	2,850
10-01-01 Engineering (non-specific)	1.0%	0.6%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	1.1%	0.9%	17,800
10-01-02 Mechanical engineering	1.2%	1.1%	1.8%	1.3%	1.7%	0.9%	1.3%	25,055
10-01-03 Production and manufacturing engineering	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	7,290
10-01-04 Aeronautical and aerospace engineering	0.4%	0.4%	0.9%	0.6%	1.0%	0.4%	0.5%	9,650
10-01-05 Naval architecture	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	245
10-01-06 Bioengineering, medical and biomedical engineering	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	3,710
10-01-07 Civil engineering	0.8%	1.0%	1.1%	0.8%	1.9%	0.7%	0.9%	17,780
10-01-08 Electrical and electronic engineering	0.7%	0.8%	1.0%	0.7%	1.3%	1.1%	0.8%	15,645
10-01-09 Chemical, process and energy engineering	0.4%	0.7%	1.1%	0.5%	1.1%	0.4%	0.5%	10,595
10-01-10 Others in engineering	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	495
10-02-01 Minerals technology	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	410
10-02-02 Materials technology	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	1,455
10-02-03 Polymers and textiles	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	215
10-02-04 Maritime technology	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	625
10-02-05 Biotechnology	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	495
10-02-06 Others in technology	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	3,060
11-01-01 Computer science	2.1%	2.3%	3.8%	2.4%	3.1%	3.3%	2.4%	46,755
11-01-02 Information technology	0.7%	0.6%	0.5%	0.4%	0.5%	0.9%	0.7%	13,445
11-01-03 Information systems	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	4,345
11-01-04 Software engineering	0.6%	0.6%	0.8%	0.5%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	11,855
11-01-05 Artificial intelligence	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	1,280
11-01-06 Computer games and animation	0.7%	0.3%	0.4%	0.8%	0.4%	0.3%	0.6%	12,800
11-01-07 Business computing	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	2,540
11-01-08 Others in computing	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	3,085
12-01-01 Geography (non-specific)	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	4,510
12-01-02 Physical geographical sciences	0.5%	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	8,350
12-01-04 Environmental sciences	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	6,695
12-01-05 Others in geographical studies	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	360
13-01-01 Architecture	0.8%	0.8%	1.1%	1.2%	1.9%	0.8%	0.9%	17,160
13-01-02 Building	1.2%	1.0%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	1.1%	21,950
13-01-03 Landscape design	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	695
13-01-04 Planning (urban, rural and regional)	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	4,500
Total science CAH level 3	46.1%	44.9%	52.6%	43.6%	48.6%	40.8%	46.6%	920,180

Data referred to in commentary on page 18:
Enrolment in HE courses by Subject and Ethnicity, 2019/20 Part 2/2

Subject	White	Black	Asian	Mixed	Other	Not known	Total %	Total
12-01-03 Human geography	0.6%	0.1%	0.3%	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%	0.5%	9,920
14-01-01 Humanities (non-specific)	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%	0.3%	5,145
14-01-02 Liberal arts (non-specific)	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	2,520
15-01-01 Social sciences (non-specific)	0.5%	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.5%	0.4%	8,705
15-01-02 Sociology	2.5%	2.5%	1.9%	3.1%	2.0%	1.0%	2.4%	47,315
15-01-03 Social policy	0.5%	1.2%	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	0.6%	10,990
15-01-04 Anthropology	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	4,035
15-01-05 Development studies	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	2,270
15-01-06 Cultural studies	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	610
15-02-01 Economics	1.3%	1.9%	3.3%	2.2%	2.2%	1.2%	1.7%	32,695
15-03-01 Politics	1.7%	1.7%	1.3%	2.1%	2.3%	1.8%	1.7%	33,290
15-04-01 Social work	1.3%	3.0%	0.7%	1.2%	0.5%	1.3%	1.4%	27,120
15-04-02 Childhood and youth studies	0.8%	0.7%	0.7%	0.5%	0.6%	0.4%	0.8%	15,690
15-04-03 Health studies	1.2%	4.2%	1.1%	1.0%	0.9%	1.7%	1.4%	28,380
16-01-01 Law	4.2%	5.9%	7.3%	5.6%	7.7%	5.9%	4.9%	96,230
17-01-01 Business and management (non-specific)	2.3%	3.8%	2.7%	2.2%	3.5%	3.4%	2.5%	49,520
17-01-02 Business studies	3.0%	5.5%	4.8%	3.4%	5.9%	3.7%	3.5%	68,405
17-01-03 Marketing	1.0%	1.3%	1.0%	1.3%	1.1%	0.7%	1.0%	20,320
17-01-04 Management studies	2.1%	3.2%	2.2%	2.0%	2.5%	2.9%	2.2%	43,670
17-01-05 Human resource management	0.4%	0.7%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.6%	0.4%	7,790
17-01-06 Tourism, transport and travel	1.0%	1.5%	0.6%	1.0%	0.9%	0.8%	1.0%	20,020
17-01-07 Finance	0.7%	1.6%	2.5%	1.0%	1.6%	0.9%	1.0%	19,240
17-01-08 Accounting	0.9%	1.8%	3.3%	1.1%	1.8%	0.9%	1.2%	24,455
17-01-09 Others in business and management	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	140
18-01-01 Information services	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	1,690
18-01-02 Publicity studies	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	1,225
18-01-03 Publishing	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	800
18-01-04 Journalism	0.5%	0.4%	0.2%	0.6%	0.4%	0.2%	0.5%	9,295
18-01-05 Media studies	1.1%	1.0%	0.5%	1.4%	0.8%	0.6%	1.0%	19,460
19-01-01 English studies (non-specific)	0.9%	0.4%	0.5%	0.9%	0.5%	0.6%	0.8%	15,295
19-01-02 English language	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	4,560
19-01-03 Literature in English	1.0%	0.3%	0.4%	0.9%	0.4%	0.5%	0.8%	16,605
19-01-04 Studies of specific authors	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	110
19-01-05 Creative writing	0.5%	0.2%	0.1%	0.5%	0.2%	1.0%	0.5%	9,215
19-01-06 Others in English studies	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	300
19-02-01 Celtic studies (non-specific)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	160
19-02-02 Gaelic studies	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	160
19-02-03 Welsh studies	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	335
19-02-04 Others in Celtic studies	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	290
19-03-01 French studies	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	4,330
19-03-02 German and Scandinavian studies	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	1,710
19-03-03 Italian studies	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	820
19-03-04 Iberian studies	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	4,755
19-03-05 Slavic studies	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	710
19-03-06 Asian studies	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	2,770
19-03-07 African and modern Middle Eastern studies	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	920
19-03-08 American and Australasian studies	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	1,600
19-03-09 Classics	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	4,755
19-03-10 Linguistics	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	3,340
19-03-11 Others in language and area studies	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.6%	0.6%	1.2%	0.5%	9,720
20-01-01 History	2.5%	0.5%	0.8%	2.0%	0.9%	2.2%	2.1%	40,950
20-01-02 History of art, architecture and design	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	4,350
20-01-03 Archaeology	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.2%	3,565
20-01-04 Heritage studies	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	430
20-02-01 Philosophy	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%	0.9%	0.4%	0.8%	0.6%	11,585
20-02-02 Theology and religious studies	0.5%	0.6%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%	8,635
21-01-01 Creative arts and design (non-specific)	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	2,595
21-01-02 Art	0.8%	0.2%	0.2%	0.9%	0.4%	1.2%	0.7%	13,710
21-01-03 Design studies	2.7%	1.7%	1.6%	3.5%	1.9%	1.4%	2.5%	50,075
21-01-04 Performing arts (non specific)	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	1,860
21-01-05 Music	1.7%	0.9%	0.3%	2.1%	0.7%	1.5%	1.5%	29,075
21-01-06 Drama	1.0%	0.5%	0.1%	1.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.8%	16,385
21-01-07 Dance	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	3,745
21-01-08 Cinematics and photography	1.5%	0.8%	0.5%	1.8%	0.9%	1.1%	1.3%	26,610
21-01-09 Others in creative arts and design	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	1,830
22-01-01 Education	3.0%	2.1%	2.2%	1.9%	2.4%	6.8%	2.9%	57,110
22-01-02 Teacher training	3.5%	1.5%	2.1%	1.9%	1.9%	3.7%	3.1%	60,370
23-01-01 Combined, general or negotiated studies	1.5%	0.6%	0.5%	0.8%	0.7%	3.3%	1.3%	25,675
23-01-02 Personal development	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	3,250
Total non-science CAH level 3	**53.9%**	**55.1%**	**47.4%**	**56.4%**	**51.4%**	**59.2%**	**53.4%**	**1,055,200**
Total	**1,444,450**	**152,420**	**226,595**	**82,370**	**35,880**	**33,660**	**1,975,380**	**1,975,380**

Source: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/what-study

Black African Learners

Feelings around Education

- Generally positive feelings about education
- Learning seen as important and valuable
- Learners often put pressure on themselves to succeed
- Can be segregated

Relationships with Teachers

- Generally positive but not "close" relationships with teachers
- More inclined to speak to parents for advice about the future than teachers
- Some examples of teachers expressing low expectations for learners
- Stereotyped as loud
- Experiences of racism

Parental Influence

- Regular and active involvement in education
- Supporting role in subject choice, one or two more active suggestions taken by learners
- High expectation to go to university and to do well
- Can add "pressure"; focus on "negatives", rarely praise. Learners say this can add to their stress but that they are also generally grateful for their support
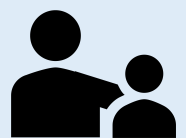
Future Intentions

- All students plan to go to college and university, even KS4 students have started to research
- Some FE students already considering masters or PhD
- Strong career focus
- Confident about their future prospects
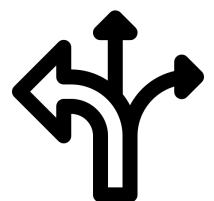
Participant Segment Profile
Black African Learners

Perceptions of Higher Education
- All see university as essential to better future, employability
- Also value learning and experience, independence
- Workload seen as a challenge, lectures, self-teaching
- Being away from home may be a challenge
- Some concerns about racism
- Diverse university important to some

Subject Choice
- Mix of subject areas
- Professional careers in mind – medicine, accounting, engineering – a key focus of learners' education and future decisions
- Parents can have a role in subject choice

Key Challenges
- Lack of Black teachers and role models
- Experience discrimination, negative stereotyping
- Underrepresentation in the media
- Challenges in the workplace

Support / Action Needed
- Diversity and representation among teachers and staff
- Racial and cultural education for staff
- University applications, personal statements – already know they want to go to university and want to know more about how to apply and what HEPs want
- Careers advice

Participant Segment Profile
Black Caribbean Learners

Feelings around Education

- Mixed experiences in education
- Education seen as important
- Feel some pressure to do well
- Very aware of negative perceptions of their ethnicity that can weigh on learners' minds
- Point out institutional racism, lack of Black history
- Experience racial slurs (reported more than other segments)

Relationships with Teachers

- Mixed relationships with teachers; some don't speak much while others do
- Black Caribbean learners feel labelled, targeted, expected to misbehave, seen as "loud", punished disproportionately
- Lower expectations for attainment, put in wrong sets

Parental Influence

- Most parents quite involved in conversations about education
- Generally supportive and want the best for their children; want them to be happy and do well, tend to have views on subject choices but not forced, one or two describe more pressure
- Support children in issues of racism
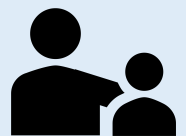
Future Intentions

- FE students all plan to go to university, actively researching and applying for universities
- Most KS4 students interested in university, a couple interested in apprenticeships
- Quite confident about their future prospects
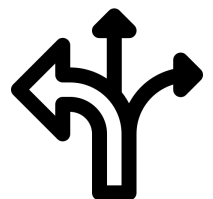
Participant Segment Profile
Black Caribbean Learners

Perceptions of Higher Education

- Generally positive perceptions of HE, particularly for employment prospects, as well as independence and life experience
- Some note a lack of representation of Black students in university promotional materials, or false representation; may have come more into focus since BLM
- Perception that some unis are more diverse/supportive of Black students than others; prefer to attend an inclusive uni
- Important for BCs to find people they can relate to at uni

Subject Choice

- Specific but varied subject choices including theatre & performance, game design, medicine, journalism, mathematics
- Tend to be more driven by enjoyment than specific careers per se

Key Challenges

- Frequently victims of racial slurs
- Refer to institutional racism
- Have experienced criticism for BLM, lack of support from schools
- Negative or limited media representation – comedy, unintelligent
- Concern about representation at university
- Student finance

Support / Action Needed

- Diversity and representation among teachers and staff at school and university
- Racial and cultural education for staff and students
- Dealing with racism, slurs etc – discipline and education of culprits as well as support and guidance for victims
- Diversity of curriculum
- KS4 learners ask for more university trips; those who have experienced these describe these as being helpful

Participant Segment Profile
Mixed Heritage Learners

Feelings around Education

- Mixed experiences in education
- Education seen as important by family
- College seen as better than school
- Experience racism, microaggressions
- Point out lack of diversity in curriculum

Relationships with Teachers

- Mixed relationships with teachers; some supportive, others less so
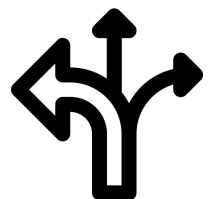- Experience discrimination and microaggressions from teachers; ignored, confused names, punished disproportionately

Parental Influence

- Regular and active involvement in education – supportive but not strict
- Parents quite involved in future subjects and choices, often including own experiences
- Expectations can vary on each side of the family, different cultures
- Support children in issues of racism

Future Intentions

- All 5 girls want to go to university while 3 boys don't
- All KS4 students want to go to college
- More interest in apprenticeships than other segments

Mixed Heritage Learners

Perceptions of Higher Education

- Positive perceptions of HE with independence and social life key motivations, as well as education
- Some concerns about workload, pressure, missing home
- Would like to go to a diverse university
- Some think that representations of diversity at universities may be false
- Awareness of racial social groups at universities

Subject Choice

- Variety of subject interests
- Relatively even mix between enjoyment and career motivation

Key Challenges

- Experience considerable amounts of racism, microaggressions
- Can feel isolated, "don't fit" with other ethnic groups

Support / Action Needed

- More diverse careers support – diverse in terms of careers/content as well representation from different ethnicities among presenters
- Racial and cultural education for staff and students
- Diversity of curriculum
- Support for young people from deprived backgrounds who may be inclined towards crime

Participant Segment Profile
Polish Learners

Feelings around Education

- Positive feelings about education and learning
- Some negative experiences around bullying
- Express that education in the UK is "better than Poland"
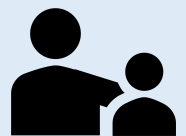- Perception that British Children "don't appreciate" their education

Relationships with Teachers

- Some positive experiences and support from teachers
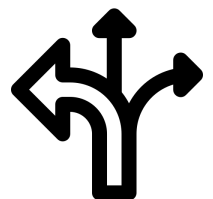- Some suggest a lack of concern/attention toward bullying and racism

Parental Influence

- Supportive but relaxed, less involved than other segments
- May not be so actively involved in education due to language barriers and/or lack of understanding of UK education system

Future Intentions

- All three want to go to university
- Relatively relaxed compared to other segments, motivated by enjoyment, not so much pressure
- Quite confident about their future prospects

Segment profile based on qualitative discussions with 3 Polish learners. This is no indicator of the scale of challenges experienced by this any other ethnicity in the wider population.

Polish Learners

Perceptions of Higher Education

- Positive perceptions of HE with independence and social life key motivations, as well as education
- Some concerns about workload, travel and finance
- Some concern that language might be difficult
- Some concern over subject choice – worry that this might be difficult to change
- Perception that university is diverse; people from all over come to study in the UK because of quality education

Subject Choice

- Variety of subject interests; mostly career focused but following these because of enjoyment rather than any external pressure; science/medicine, art, media/film

Key Challenges

- Language difficulties for learners born in Poland
- Some experiences of bullying, mostly related to language difficulties and challenges integrating into new schools, more so than racism specifically
- Parent's understanding of UK education system

Support / Action Needed

- Racial and cultural education for staff and students
- Diversity of curriculum
- Support learners with language difficulties
- Parental support and education around the UK education system

Participant Segment Profile
South Asian Learners

Feelings around Education
- Generally positive feelings about education, good experiences with students and teachers
- Education seen as important
- Often go to diverse or high-proportion South Asian schools
- Some tendency to self-segregate

Relationships with Teachers
- Mostly positive experiences with teachers; many living and working in high-proportion South Asian schools and areas, teachers are "used to" South Asian people
- One comment around lack of understanding or sensitivity to religious perspectives within Science class around evolution

Parental Influence
- Parents fairly involved in conversations about education
- Can be some parental pressure; families talk about children's academic progress
- "Respect" around careers and subject choice
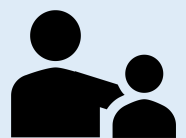
Future Intentions
- All students plan to go to college and university
- Quite confident about their future prospects
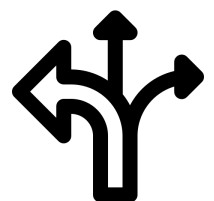
Participant Segment Profile
South Asian Learners

Perceptions of Higher Education
- Generally positive perceptions of HE, mainly for progress with career
- Some interest in "freedom" but may be less inclined to "student life" than others/White students
- Parents often want children to stay at home or study close to home
- Some concern about student finance
- One mention of positive discrimination aiding uni applications

Subject Choice
- Strong focus on careers among subject choice
- Professional careers in mind – medicine, dentistry, accounting
- Parental/cultural perceptions and respect around careers is apparent

Key Challenges
- Reports of discrimination in school are rare compared to other segments but does occur at times
- Awareness of some negative perceptions of South Asians – terrorism, suppressed women

Support / Action Needed
- Few mentions of any specific challenges relevant to ethnicity
- Promoting awareness of cultural differences
- Student finance and surrounding advice
- Possible need to explore subject and career choices with learners, ensure these are considered and appropriate, as may experience parental and cultural pressure

ABOUT COSMOS

Organisation Summary

Cosmos Engagement ltd. is an organisation that has significant experience and expertise delivering research & evaluation services and outreach initiatives for the education sector.
We are currently working with a range of Uni Connect consortiums to deliver evaluation programmes and targeted outreach initiatives in specific Uni Connect wards.

Conducting Research & Evaluation in an Educational setting

The following examples show the breadth of our experience in delivering research & evaluation programmes in an educational setting:

Evaluation & Impact Programmes, Uni Connect | Evaluation & Impact programmes for Uni Connect consortiums, constituting a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods with learners, stakeholders & parents/carers. We are experienced in completing qualitative projects with young learners within an educational setting. We have experience in developing in-depth case studies, and conducting 1:1 interviews (F2F or telephone), discussion groups, intercepts (short on-the-spot interviews) and vox pops.

Specific examples of qualitative projects include conducting short interviews with young learners whilst in-situ attending a three day, Uni Connect funded, English Literature Festival. 117 interviews were conducted, with the findings and insight fed in to the analysis of the results for the attitudinal survey. In addition, we also filmed vox pops (short filmed videos) of learners immediately after an initiative has been completed, the output of these were used to develop impact case studies for a specific school.

The Director of Research & Strategy, Sarah Dirrane, has vast experience evaluating access and outreach programmes within a HEP setting – inc. tracking attitudinal shifts, changes in behaviour pre and post initiative. Sarah also led the Research & Intelligence Team at a large HEP for 5 years and was responsible for delivering a large portfolio of strategic research projects, which comprised primary and secondary approaches; from qualitative projects capturing the student voice to synthesising, reconciling and analysing large students datasets –inc. UCAS & HESA datasets.

Collaborative working | We are accustomed to working effectively across, and collaborating with, a number of stakeholders within an educational setting. This includes working on an Evaluation Programme that involved liaising with stakeholders across a number of schools, colleges and HEPs in order to set up and deliver the evaluation of a specific initiative. This required liaisons with practitioners and teachers on the ground, and the access and Uni Connect teams at the HEP simultaneously.

Understanding of Widening Participation, Outreach & access to HE

Working Experience | Both the Managing Director, Sean Dirrane, and Director of Research & Strategy , Sarah Dirrane, have worked in the Higher Education and public sectors for 17+ years. Sean is also an experienced Widening Participation practitioner and manager. Whilst Sarah has experience on the strategic evaluation of access and outreach initiatives.

Development of 19-20 Access and Participation Plan | Sarah has led on the strategic development and delivery of the 19-20 Access and Participation Plan for a HEP. The plan was developed in conjunction with a number of departments at the university and Sarah was responsible for ensuring that the plan met and addressed the new regulatory guidance released by the Office for Students (OfS). Sarah attended the OfS conference and extensively reviewed the new guidance documents, mapping them back to previous Access Agreement submissions. Hence, Sarah has a sound understanding of the wider context, national aims and objectives of access work going forward and which groups are most under-represented nationally and at what point in the student journey – access, success or progression.

Engagement & Outreach Work | The engagement strand to the organisation delivers a range of outreach initiatives for a number of Uni Connects, Local Authorities and HEPs to raise aspirations, awareness of HE options in conjunction with building young learners' confidence and ability to set and achieve their educational goals. A specific bespoke project, Marginal Gains Programme, has been designed to engage with young white males from economically disadvantaged background to improve their progression rates – which is key Uni Connect national objective.

ABOUT COSMOS

RESEARCHING BAME COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

In our experience, national, ethnic and community identities are far more complex than often expected. Hence, we fully understand the need to 'dig deep' when conducting interviews with this target group to help GHWY uncover rich nuanced insights that will inform how to best support BAME communities to progress to HE and to understand the educational opportunities of BAME young people.

The vast majority of our HE research programmes include exploring the BAME community as a separate comparator group to their white counterparts. Hence, we have built a large knowledge bank of knowledge of how the BAME community behaves within the context of the HE sector. Specific examples of knowledge areas include:

Case Study – A national study on BAME prospective students for a large HEP | In 2019, we conducted a large-scale, multi-method qualitative enquiry across England and Wales to inform and advise stakeholders at a large HEP. We included 124 participants, and analysed 3500+ of minutes of interviewing. Areas of exploration focused on: decision-making process and influencers; attitudes to education; barriers to higher education; preferred modes of learning; preferred study intensity; reception of communications and messaging from HEPs; ethnic representation in higher education and in British society and media. Findings from this study informed on the need to further segment the 'BAME' category into far more distinctive groups given the different ways that the cultures influence these various communities. The findings identified key needs gaps and we were asked to deliver three debriefs of this research to stakeholders and senior leaders at this HEP.

Case study - Travellers Initiative | We were commissioned to carry out a research enquiry that sought to understand the Travellers' views and perceptions of HE and assess the impact of educational initiatives they have participated in. We adapted our research methods accordingly in order to gain access to this BAME group who are particularly suspicious and very guarded to those outside of their community, in order to gain access. Methods were undertaken which were sensitive and considerate of their culture in order top build trust, e.g. avoiding certain topics, ensuring our approach was non - threatening and open. This project involved conducting informal semi-structured qualitative interviews in an environment that they felt safe and comfortable in. In the lead up to the fieldwork, we worked closely with the gatekeeper (who had gained their trust over a number of years). Insights from this enquiry will help to identify key success factors of widening participation initiatives that have the most significant impact amongst this group. These can be replicated in future initiatives to support this group in their journey to HE.

Case Study - Secondary analysis of large-scale HE attitudinal survey | We carried out advanced statistical analysis on a large-scale survey that explored student attitudes towards HE – the sample constituted 6,000+ responses. In order to meet the objectives to evaluate levels of Knowledge, Attitudes, Aspirations and Intentions towards HE, we identified and aggregated Key Questions relating to each of these themes. During the analysis phase we compared key demographic groups, including ethnicity, to identify any statistically significant differences or commonalties between the groups. We uncovered key differences in attitude amongst the BAME groups, including much stronger intent to study vs. their white counterparts. When broken down, this varied widely dependent on ethnic grouping; with black students showing much stronger intent to study at HE level than all other ethnic groups. The key insights fed directly in to strategic access and outreach plans that would determine the targeting of activities by certain demographic attributes and need assessment of key groups. The insights also fed in to the continuous development and improvement of the activity content.

METHODS EXPERIENCE

We are experienced in delivering a large portfolio of research methodologies from complex quantitative modelling projects to more immersive qualitative case studies. We use a wide range of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, often as part of the same project, to meet the objectives set by the brief. For qualitative methods in particular, we offer a wide range including, ethnography, 1:1 depths, online diaries., discussion groups, triads, co-creation workshops and, participatory and longitudinal methods.

Case study - Impact Qualitative Case Studies | We developed a number of qualitative case studies to establish the extent to which a local programme had supported positive student outcomes (12 students) and partnership working (what is working well and key challenges) within seven urban and rural schools and colleges. The case studies employed a 360-degree approach, which included feedback from students, their parents and carers and school and college representatives. This included F2F and telephone interviews, online diaries and video case studies. The research explored the distance travelled by students in terms of where they were before and after they had participated in the programme. Findings provided positive insights into the impact of the programme and to what extent the programme objectives were achieved. We have also been invited to present the case studies at the client's annual conference to key internal and external stakeholders. **The full suite of case studies, including the report and video outputs can be accessed** here.

ABOUT COSMOS

Sarah Dirrane | Director, Research & Strategy

- ✓ **Trained researcher** – Masters in Research Methodology at University of Leeds
- ✓ Experienced in delivering **multi-method research programmes** across both qualitative & quantitative research methods
- ✓ Led on **evaluation & Impact programme** for Uni Connect consortiums and access/outreach initiatives
- ✓ Delivered research & evaluation services in the **education, HE and public sectors**
- ✓ **Developed Access & Participation Plans** – deep understanding of the wider access and outreach context
- ✓ **Knowledge & understanding of the HE sector** – led the research & Intelligence Team for 5 years at a large HEP

Dean Biddulph| Senior Research Manager

- ✓ Experienced research manager, having successfully managed a large number of HE research programmes – inc. qualitative and quantitative
- ✓ Adept in carrying out both qualitative and quantitative methods, including in-depth telephone interviews and immersive longitudinal qualitative case studies
- ✓ Knowledge of the HE sector and the complexities of HE structures, inc. disseminating findings to those at senior level and negotiating access to students via. school partners
- ✓ Experience across a range of sectors and high profile clients
- ✓ BSc Psychology, MSc Psychology of Advertising
- ✓ MRS (Market Research Society) Advanced Certificate
- ✓ Experience teaching English as a foreign language overseas

Habib Lodal | Associate Researcher

- ✓ Vast experience in conducting qualitative and quantitative research in educational settings with potential and current students
- ✓ Experienced and skilled qualitative moderator with vast experience of conducting a number of qualitative methodologies
- ✓ Knowledge & understanding of the HE sector – 10+ years experience working within the HE sector
- ✓ Experience in moderating discussion groups with an international audience that had a high proportion of those from the BAME communities


Sean Dirrane | Managing Director

- ✓ **Significant knowledge** of the HE sector
- ✓ 10-year career at Leeds Beckett University, **Widening Participation Practitioner & WP Manager: Research & Evaluation**
- ✓ **Engagement & Training** - specialist in the Education and Social Care sectors
- ✓ Works with a range of WP audiences and has relevant and extensive experience **working with school & college stakeholders**
- ✓ **Works closely with a number of Uni Connects** delivering work which is highly focussed on supporting and developing underrepresented and marginalised groups, primary focusing on supporting young underrepresented men through the Marginal Gains programme
- ✓ Has also developed a number of other initiatives working with the Social Care sector and Uni Connect networks

Extensive experience working in the Uni Connect space…

Our clients include…

Please also visit cosmosltd.uk for further details about Cosmos.
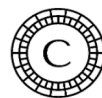
Cosmos Engagement Ltd
Castleton Mill
Castleton Close
Leeds, LS12 2DS
W| cosmosltd.uk
E | hello@cosmosltd.uk
T | 0113 887 0191