

National Evaluation and Capacity Building for the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP)

*Summary of findings from Year 1 of the formative
and impact evaluations
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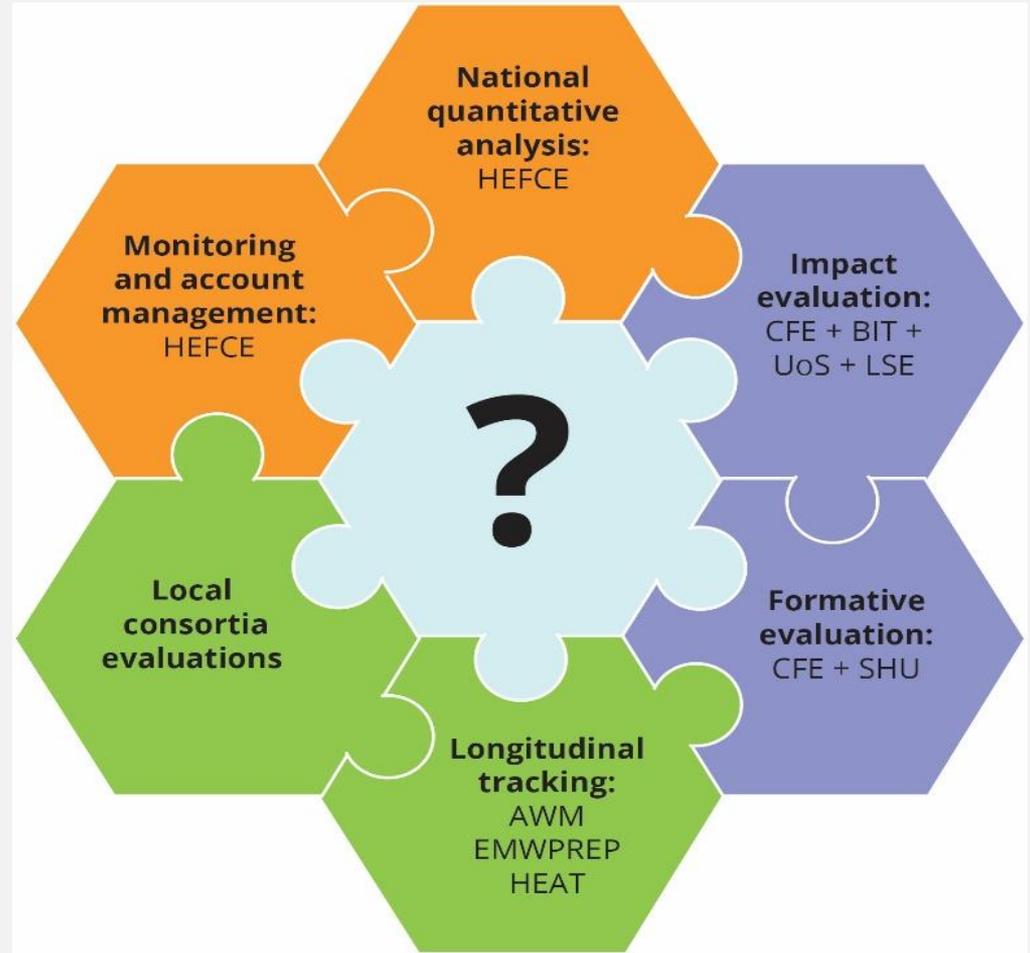
THE
BEHAVIOURAL
INSIGHTS TEAM.



Overview of the evaluations' aims and objectives and methodological approach

Building the evidence base

- Impact evaluation using RCTs and quasi-experimental methods
- Formative evaluation exploring effectiveness of design and delivery
- Capacity building to support local evaluations



Aims and objectives

Formative evaluation

Examine the effectiveness of the design and implementation of NCOP to understand what works, in what context and why:

- *explore the set-up and implementation of the collaborative approaches to outreach*
- *develop capacity within consortia to undertake robust evaluation at a local level*
- *triangulate local and national evidence to assess effectiveness of partnerships and their impact on the delivery of outreach*
- *Identify good practice and areas for improvement*

Impact evaluation

Assess the consequential changes resulting from the diversity of NCOP interventions, by utilising a range of experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies. The evaluation will explore the impact of NCOP interventions on:

- *students' knowledge of HE*
- *students' aspirations towards HE*
- *progression rates to HE for NCOP target learners*

Progress to date

Formative evaluation:

- Development of National Evaluation Framework, including logic chain and indicator bank
- Online survey of 849 governors, consortia leads and staff exploring views and experiences of partnership working and perceived impact of NCOP
- Field visits to cross-section of six consortia to explore operating models, partnership working, school engagement and local evaluation plans and progress
- Review of consortia operating plans and evaluation frameworks
- Analysis of JISCmail postings

Progress to date

Capacity building:

- Introductory workshop for consortia members attended by research team, tracking organisations and HEFCE
- Two webinars and associated support materials on survey design and the use of quasi-experimental methods
- Provision of information and ongoing support from case managers
- Advice to HEFCE on monitoring requirements
- Development of an NCOP Portal hosted on the CFE website

Progress to date

Impact evaluation:

- 19 scoping interviews with HEFCE, the tracking organisations and consortia staff.
- Participant baseline survey of 57, 894 pupils, including 28,121 NCOP target learners.
- Development and implementation of 2 flagship RCTs:
 1. Light touch nudging text-based
 2. E-mentoring
- Liaison with tracking organisations to facilitate data sharing and consistency in data capture and definition of activities

Key findings: Consortia partnerships

NCOP is enhancing collaborative working

- Diverse partners bring fresh ideas and enhanced expertise.
- Further Education Colleges (FECs) have an important role to play.
- Establishing partnerships, and recruiting staff in particular, has been time-consuming.
- There is scope to improve communication between partners, especially relating to targeting learners.

There is a balance to be struck between devolving and centralising control

- Some central control is needed to ensure a coordinated and coherent offer.
- Employing staff teams centrally is helpful...
- But basing them in the community helps to build local relationships and develop tailored responses.
- Maintaining a clear and separate NCOP identity (separate to providers) is important for being seen as impartial.

Consortia partnerships: Spectrum of models in operation

Centrally-controlled

- Central co-ordination ensures consistent and coherent approach across consortium
- Funding is ring-fenced for NCOP
- NCOP identity and impartiality is maintained

Devolved

- Community-based staff build relationships with local stakeholders
- Greater freedom and flexibility for tailored outreach offers
- Effective communication mechanisms with lead organisation is key

Key findings: School and FEC Engagement

School and FEC engagement

Consortia have engaged with over 1,200 schools and colleges to date

- NCOP is reaching new schools/colleges that were not engaged in outreach
- Establishing relationships with some schools and FEC in particular has been challenging
- More needs to be done to help schools and FECs to understand the targeted nature of NCOP and how it is distinct from other outreach activities.



Schools' lack of time and resources is key barrier to engagement

This can be addressed by:

- Aligning outreach with school curriculum and priorities
- Allowing plenty of lead-in time to plan activity
- Providing funding and resources to assist engagement

Targeted nature of the programme may be less of an issue than outreach staff perceive

Bespoke programmes felt to be most effective

- But generic approaches used to deliver activity quickly
- NCOP is enabling activities that would not be possible otherwise
- Parents are a key influence on learner decisions but engaging parents is challenging. Community based approaches seem more promising.

Key findings:

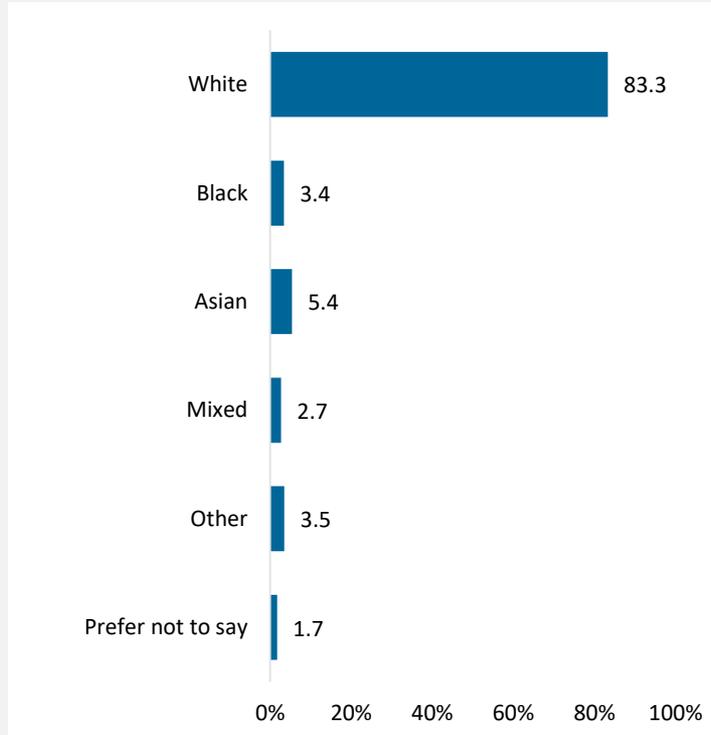
Evaluation of NCOP at the local and national level

There is scope to strengthen local evaluation plans

- Evaluation needs to be embedded rather than a 'bolt-on'
- Some plans lack specific targets and outcomes beyond the overarching programme goals.
- A dedicated evaluation post should be an integral part of staffing models.
- NCOP is helping to drive the greater use of quasi-experimental methods and RCTs

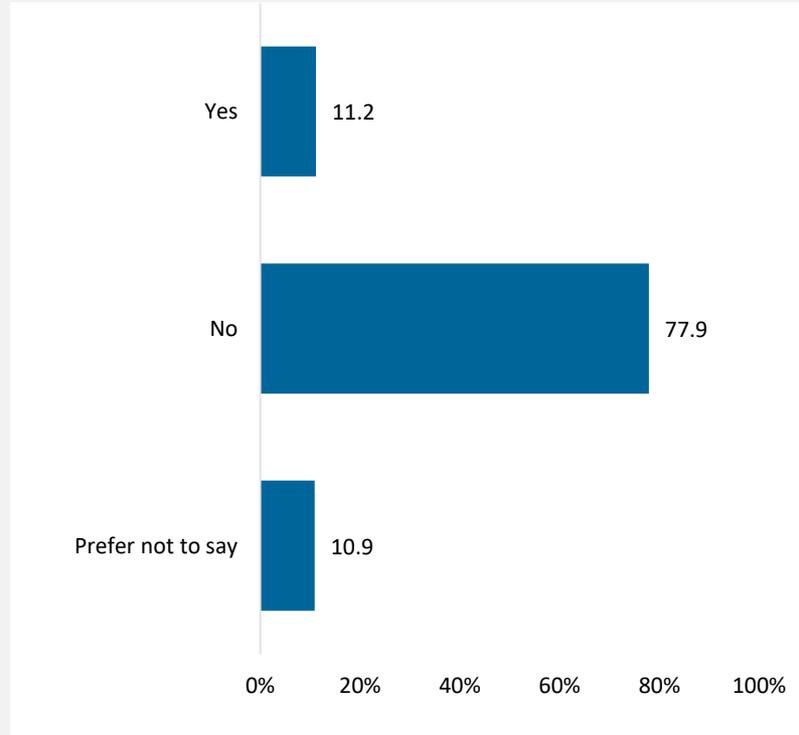
***Key findings:
Learner perceptions of
higher education***

Baseline Survey: Ethnicity



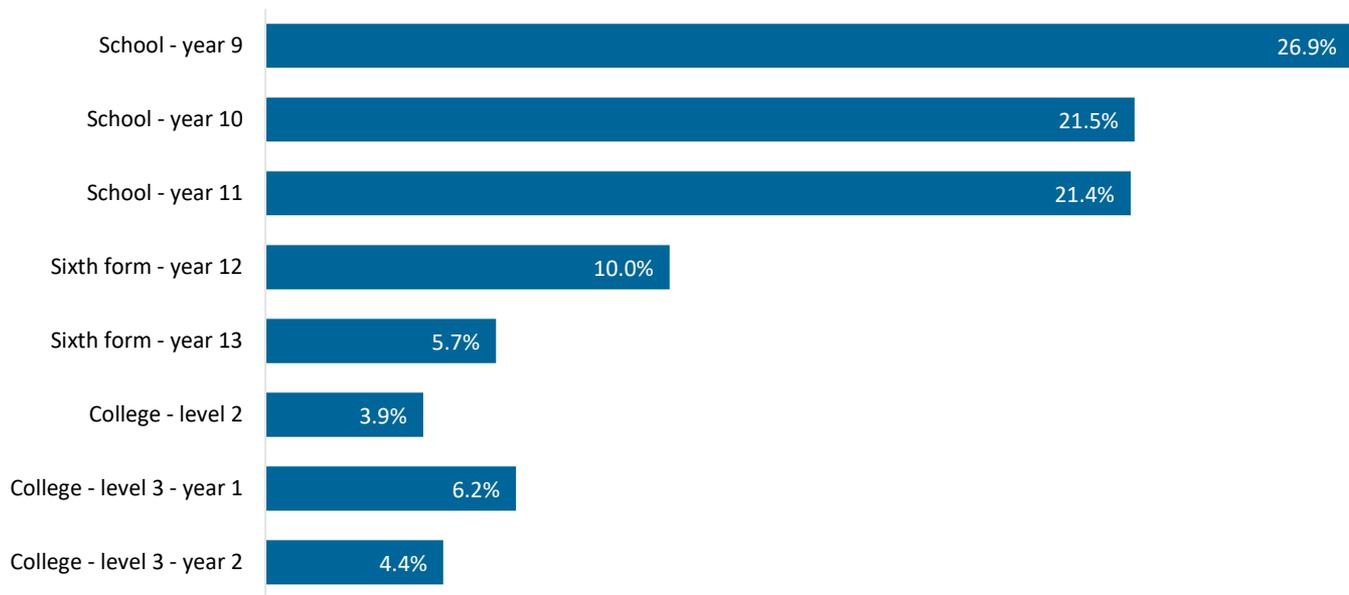
Ethnicity, re-coded. Base = 24,408

Baseline Survey: Disability



Do you have a disability, learning difficulty or long-term physical or mental health condition? Base = 24,371

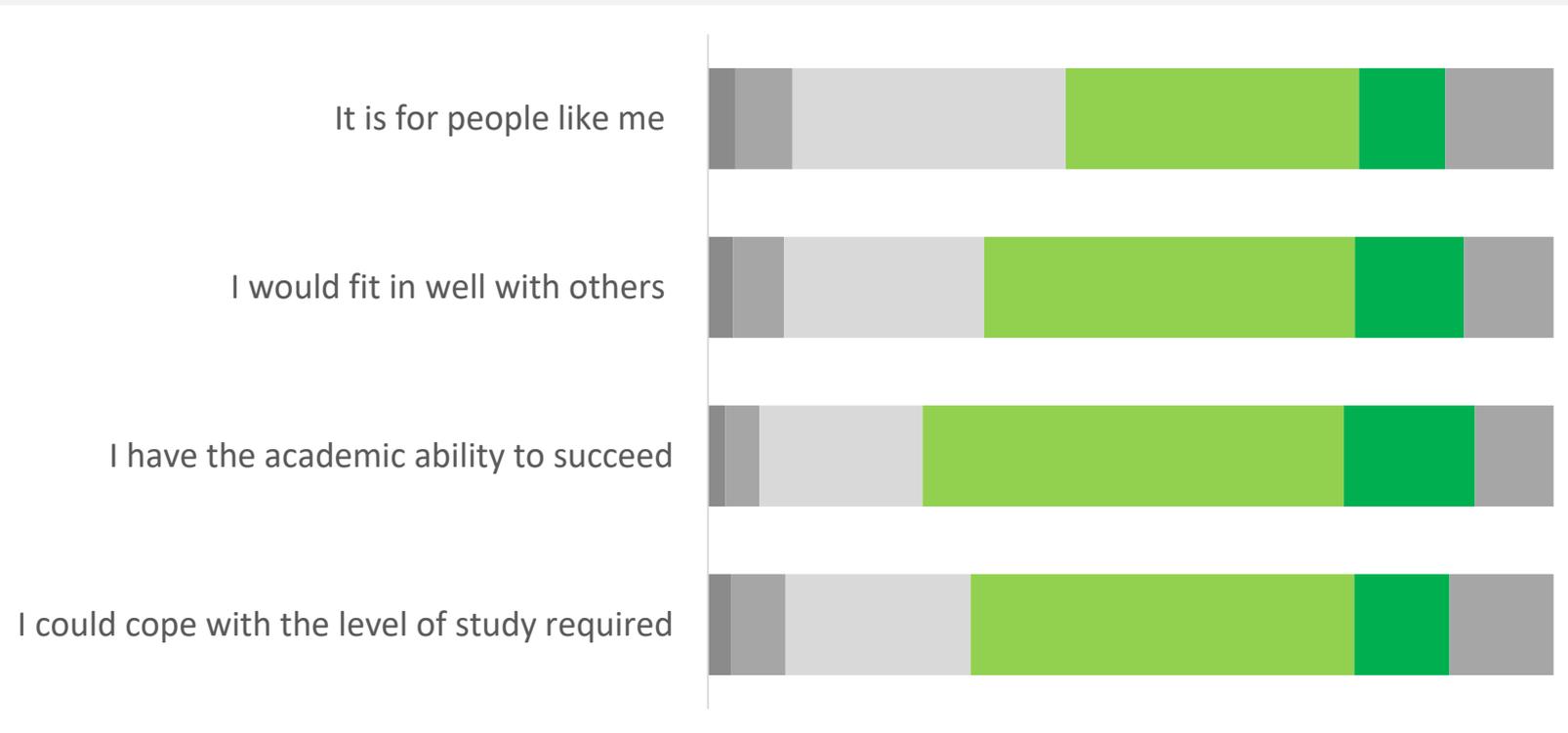
Baseline Survey: Learner Profile



Which year of study are you in? Base = 27,975

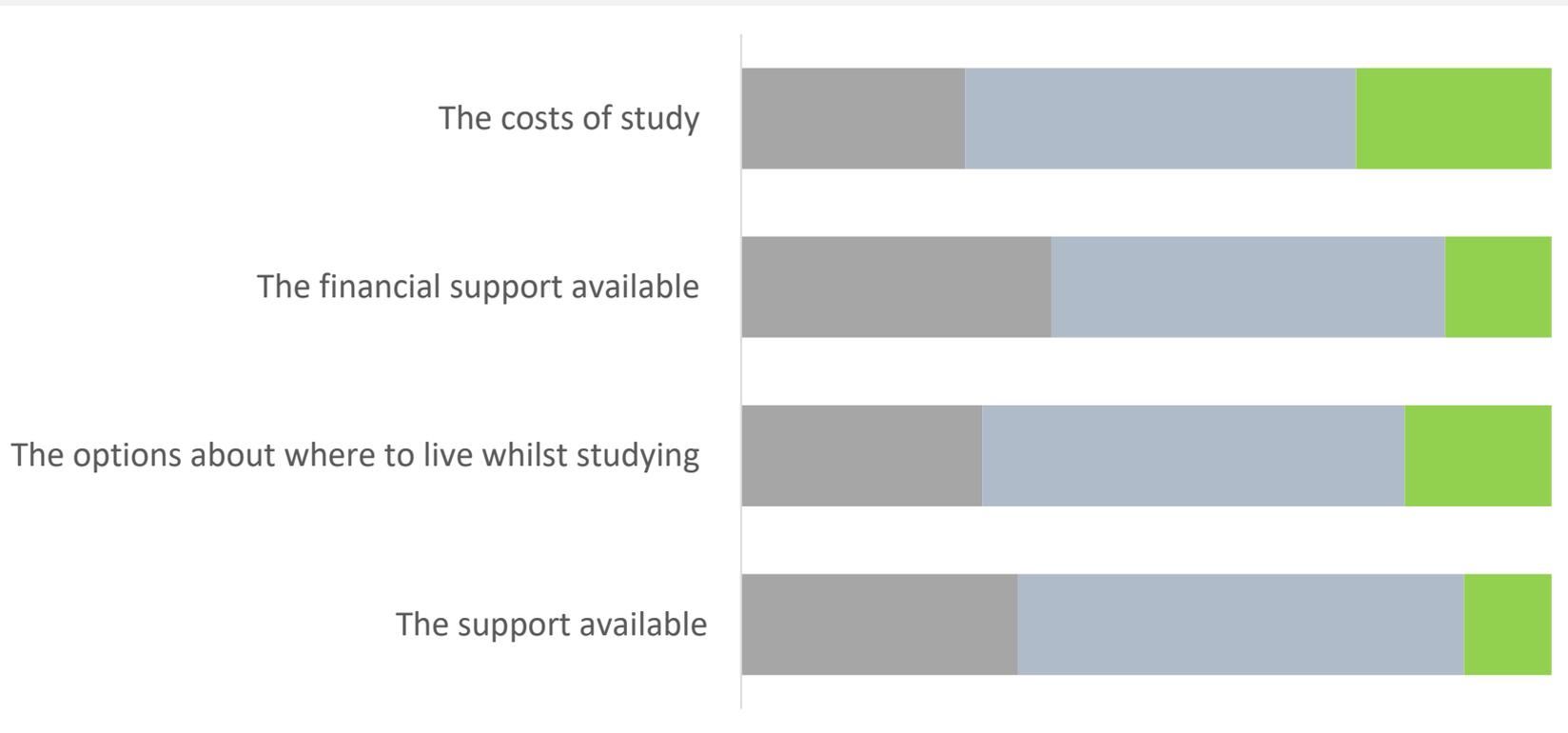
Learners tend to have positive views of HE

Green represents those who agree or strongly agree

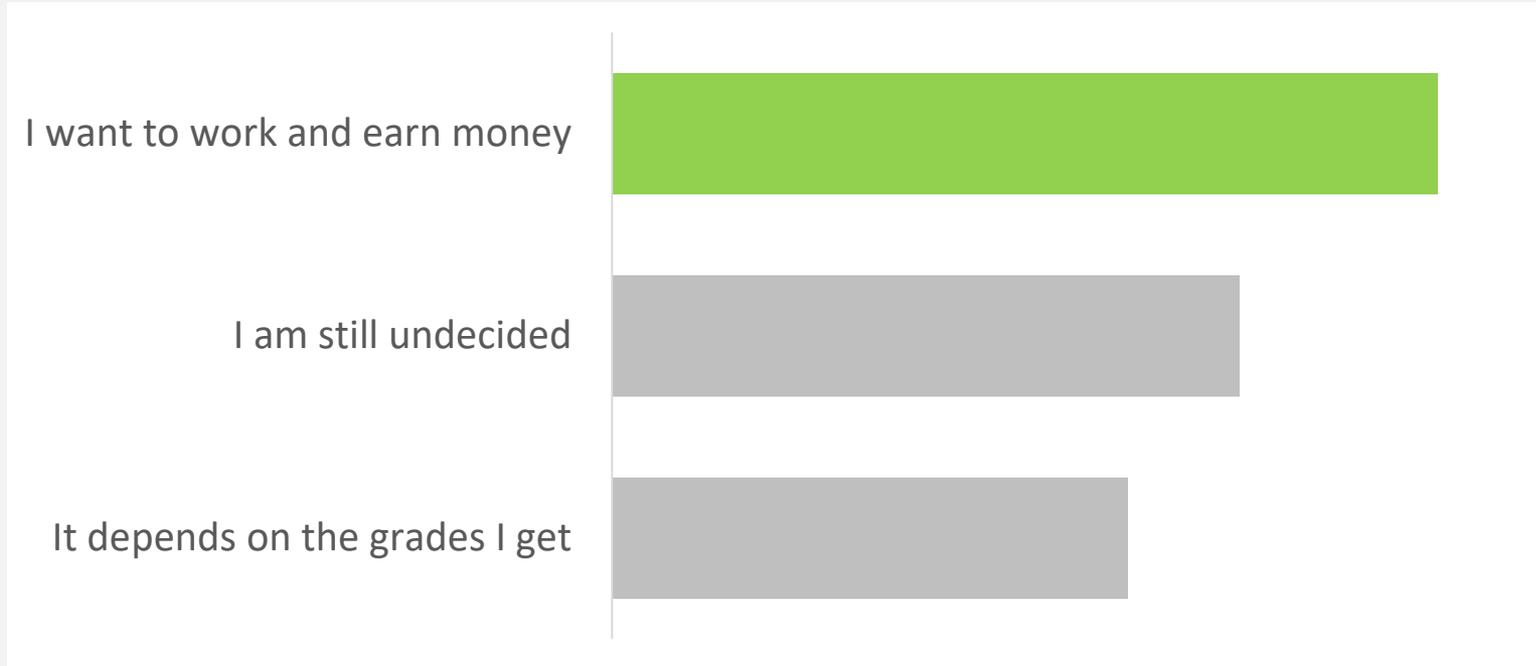


But are less confident about practical aspects

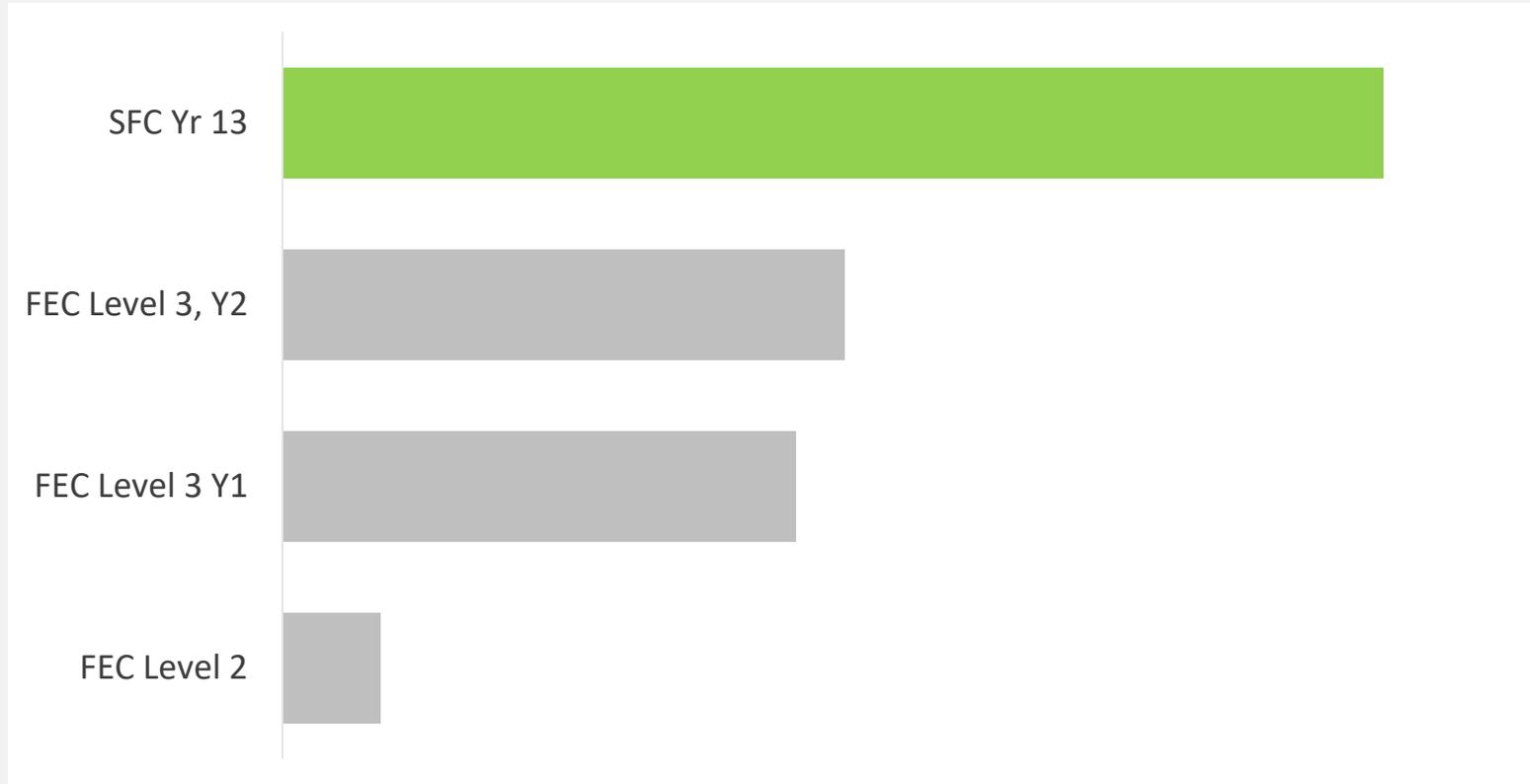
Green represents those who say they know a lot



Desire to work and earn money main reason for not pursuing HE



College students less likely to plan to study away from home compared to sixth-formers



Emerging lessons and next steps

Emerging lessons

Now partnerships are established, its time to capitalise on investment

- A great deal of time, effort and resource has been invested in developing partnerships and outreach offers in Year 1
- NCOP has brought stakeholders together that have not worked in collaboration before
- Diversity of partnerships is a key feature & benefit of NCOP
- Target learners have a positive attitude to HE - disabled students and white working class boys required more tailored support to overcome barriers



Next steps – things to explore further

- Impact of NCOP on aspirations, knowledge and intentions
- Operating models
- Sustainability of outreach
- Role of the learner voice
- Effective interventions with parents
- Use of NCOP to innovate and ‘test and learn’
- Challenges of implementing RCTs and other rigorous evaluation methods