

NEON Awards 2024 Nominations

Category

NEON Widening Access Partnership Award

Names of institutions involved in the partnership

Sheffield Hallam University & The University of Sheffield

Brief Description

South Yorkshire Children's University - Widening access through learning beyond the curriculum. A regional approach to facilitating access to and understanding the impact of, enrichment activity beyond the curriculum. Funded by Sheffield Hallam University and The University of Sheffield

Why has this project been nominated

The two Sheffield universities have invested in a longer-term approach to widening access in South Yorkshire. It is clear from regional data and EEF evaluation that participation in learning beyond the curriculum via Children's University activity has a positive impact on school attendance, attainment, skills literacy, and career aspiration. Aware of the links widening access, the two universities – with a long history of collaboration through The Higher Education Progression Partnership (Hepp), have invested in a unique, regionally collaborative approach to Children's University (CU) provision. Whilst respecting the autonomy of the individual, regional Children's University centres and building on the sector leading success of Sheffield CU, their investment has led to the establishment of an 'umbrella' organisation – South Yorkshire Children's University (SYCU). This collaboration has led to the establishment of two new CU centres in Rotherham and Barnsley and has brought greater collaboration amongst those which pre-existed – Sheffield and Doncaster. Through this pioneering approach, including a multi-agency approach via collaboration with FECs and local authorities, schools and families have access to a greater range of activities beyond the curriculum across a larger area. The partnership organisation has developed pioneering approaches to reaching participants through initiatives such as 'project in a box' which brings standalone CU activity to harder to reach areas. Additionally, the partnership has recently established an innovative approach to impact evaluation with ethical approval to match the attainment, attendance and participation data from regional CUs with attitudinal impact on participants via a benchmark and annual learner survey.