



Widening Participation Annual Report 23

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UNIVERSITY

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Foreword

Claire Morgan
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education and Students

At Cardiff University we are proud to be a global civic university that recognises the benefits that a diverse student community can bring.

We are third in the Russell Group for the percentage of undergraduate students from low participation neighbourhood and fifth in the Russell Group for the number of undergraduates from state schools (HESA 2020/21).

Widening participation activity takes part across the university, from Physics Mentoring, to programmes for adult learners, to work with asylum seekers and refugees.

Our successful residential Summer School programme sees hundreds of school-aged students have the opportunity to experience the benefits and joys of life as a Cardiff University student.

Our School Governor scheme sees over one hundred members of staff and students working in collaboration with Schools in our local communities; offering knowledge and expertise from a broad range of disciplines and professional services.

These achievements, demonstrate the kind of institution we are proud to be; one that supports Welsh Government priorities on tackling poverty, educational attainment, social mobility, the Welsh language, and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.

Our Widening Participation Strategy 2020-2025 is reflective of our aspirations.



Our vision is founded on our values and commitment to supporting and celebrating diversity, creating an open and inclusive community, and putting students at the heart of what we do. Our Widening Participation strategy has four main aims:

1. To engage and inspire people of all generations to consider higher education as a realistic and achievable option.
2. To attract and recruit students with academic potential, regardless of background or personal experiences.
3. To enable a successful transition to university and foster an excellent and supportive student experience.
4. To nurture and encourage confident and successful futures for all.

This annual review reflects upon the last year, and showcases and celebrates the progress teams across the university have made in making Cardiff University a place of learning for all.

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Hello everyone

Rachel Leighton

Head of Widening Participation

At Cardiff University, we believe in the power of education to transform lives; and that the challenges learners face in wider society should not be barriers to achieving their full potential and gaining access to meaningful and fulfilling careers.

Through our work we strive to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, are inspired to apply to university and study, succeed and thrive at Cardiff University and beyond.

This annual review highlights the successes of Widening Participation (WP) projects that have been delivered this year. It showcases activity of the WP team, as well as work being delivered in academic schools.



Summer Schools

2023 saw the return of in-person and residential summer schools, and we were thrilled to welcome 175 adult learners and young people to our summer programmes.



Summer Schools are one of the most important projects that the WP team deliver every year; they literally change lives. Each year our Summer School participants learn and develop new skills, they make new friends and have fun. Our Summer School participants push themselves out of their comfort zone and try something new, building resilience and confidence. When our participants graduate from Summer Schools, they are proud to talk about their work and achievements with equally proud parents and guardians.



20

Days of engagement provided

23

Skills and advice sessions provided

19

Academic and taster sessions provided

59

Student Ambassadors employed

14

Social activities

175

Participants

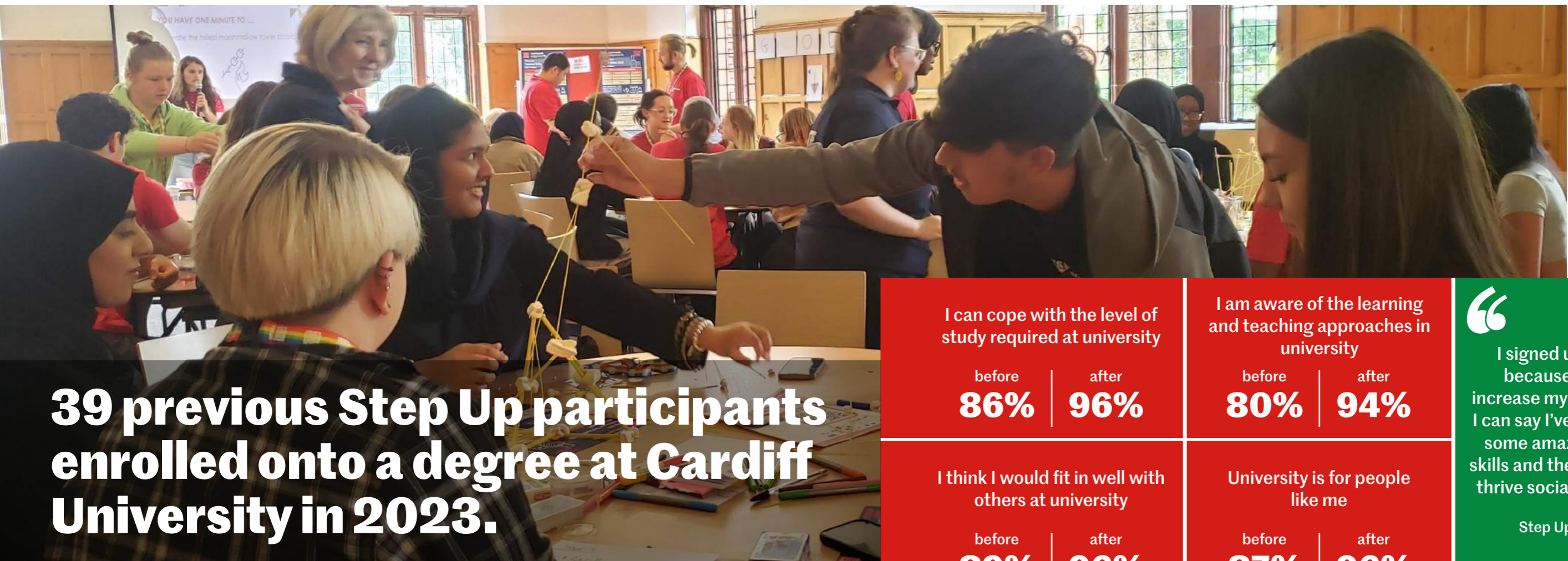
Step Up to University

In 2023, we welcomed 174 successful applicants to the launch of our Step Up to University programme. Programme participants took part in six workshops in academic areas, including: Health and Wellbeing, Humanities and Social Sciences, Languages, Literacy and Communication, Maths and Numeracy, and Science and Technology.

The 2023 Step Up Summer School provided 57 young people with a safe space to make new friends and learn about student life. A mix of social and academic activities aimed to build participants' confidence, and develop the skills and knowledge required to succeed at university. Over three days, participants collaborated on an academic research project with topics ranging from the historic and legal implications of medical interventions to the ethical and psychological considerations of new

technologies. Participants were offered a series of academic taster sessions, including topics as diverse as graphic novels, the life cycle of stars and coding skills.

The young people also got to experience the social side of student life by staying in university halls of residence, and enjoying a quiz night and a pizza party in the park.



39 previous Step Up participants enrolled onto a degree at Cardiff University in 2023.

I can cope with the level of study required at university

before	after
86%	96%

I am aware of the learning and teaching approaches in university

before	after
80%	94%

I think I would fit in well with others at university

before	after
89%	96%

University is for people like me

before	after
87%	96%



I signed up to Step Up because I wanted to increase my confidence, but I can say I've also developed some amazing teamwork skills and the belief that I will thrive socially at university.

Step Up participant



Pathways to Law

Pathways to Law is delivered in partnership with the Sutton Trust, a social mobility charity, and is supported by the School of Law and Politics.

The programme offers Year 12 students who are interested in a career in Law: academic and practical workshops, industry field trips, work experience placements and national conferences, to support their journey into a law degree. In 2023, participants engaged with industry professionals on a trip to the Inner Temple in London.



Seven previous Pathways to Law participants enrolled onto degree at Cardiff University in 2023.



126

Number of participants

18

Hours of engagement per participant

3

Number of field trips

I think I would fit in well with others at university

before **78%** | after **100%**

I have the academic ability to succeed at university

before **83%** | after **100%**

I feel confident in my ability to submit a strong university application

before **48%** | after **94%**

“ This opportunity changed my life, helped me access greater opportunities in my prospect universities and overall has improved my education and interpersonal skills.

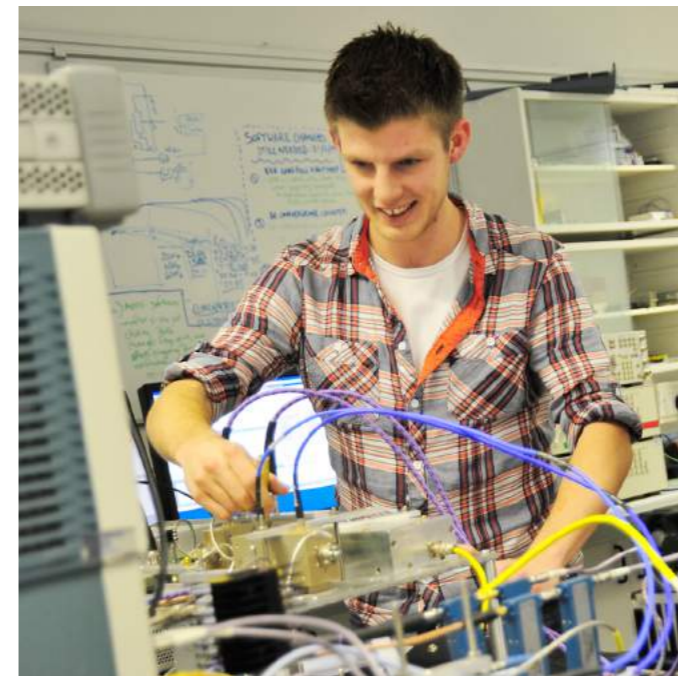
April, Pathways to Law 2021-2023





Pathways to Engineering

Pathways to Engineering is delivered in partnership with the Sutton Trust and is supported by the School of Engineering..



The programme offers Year 12 students who are interested in a career in Engineering: academic and practical workshops, industry field trips and work experience placements, to support their journey into an engineering degree. In 2023, participants engaged with industry professionals on trips to BA, ARUP and Mercedes.

27

Number of participants

378

Hours of engagement

4

Number of field trips

Sutton Trust

Medicine and Dentistry Summer School

This Summer School provided four days of activity for 72 aspiring Medicine and Dentistry students.

Participants got the chance to experience what life would be like studying these subjects at Cardiff University, through practical and clinical skills activities such as, taking blood and 3D printing dental aligners. The Summer School also shed light on the admissions and interview process for participants through a Q&A and mock interview skills practice session with

real medical professionals and current Cardiff University students. 2023 was the first year that Dentistry had its own programme of activities, providing specific advice and information sessions, and work experience in a dental hospital, for 20 young people. Participants also got to experience the social side of student life with a trip to Cardiff Bay.



Six previous Sutton Trust medical school participants joined Cardiff University in 2023.

85%

Survey respondents had a positive change to their perception of Cardiff University

89%

Survey respondents indicated they feel confident in preparing a medicine or dentistry application

93%

Survey respondents felt that they learnt a lot through attending the summer school

91%

Survey respondents indicated that attending the summer school motivated them for school

“

My biggest takeaway from the summer school is just to be my authentic self throughout the whole application process.

My self-confidence has improved as well as my confidence in applying for medicine.

Sutton Trust Summer School Participant

”

ASPIRE

Cardiff University has been awarded University of Sanctuary status.

It is committed to fostering a culture of welcome and a sense of belonging for the sanctuary seeking community. The Aspire programme provides opportunities for sanctuary seekers to learn about higher education in the UK.

Aspire Open Day

In summer 2023, the Aspire Open Day offered tailored university information and guidance for sanctuary seekers and featured guest speakers from Let's Teach, Glitter Cymru and The Red Cross, as well as information sessions on UCAS and part-time courses.



Aspire Summer School

The Aspire Summer School gave 27 refugees and asylum seekers the opportunity to attend a programme designed to support the development of English language skills, confidence, and address some of the challenges in applying to university. The programme included daily English language classes, a campus tour and level 3 community course taster sessions. Taster sessions included: project management, starting a business and the Welsh political system. The Aspire Summer School was a partnership with Lifelong Learning and the English Language Programme.

“Aspire has improved my confidence because the teachers and other staff created a very comfortable environment for us to ask as many questions as we wanted. The opportunity to do group work within these sessions also helped with my confidence and helped me form friendships.

Malaika, Aspire summer school participant

Aspire opens your eyes to the opportunities and support available to access higher education, I would recommend it to all refugees who want to get into HE in the UK.

Hamed, Aspire summer school participant

I have broadened my academic knowledge but also feel encouraged and informed about how I can access higher education in the UK as well as the support that is available to me.

Abdullateef, Aspire summer school participant

16

Countries represented

12

Languages spoken

74

Attendees

50

Hours of engagement provided

13

Participants progressed onto level 3 and 4 programmes in the university

91%

Participants felt the project had improved their English skills

65%

of attendees felt university was 'for them' **before** the Open Day

83%

of attendees felt university was 'for them' **after** the Open Day



Discovery

The Discovery programme is for young people with autism spectrum conditions who are interested in coming to university.

Discovery enlightens attendees about university life and supports them to develop social skills and confidence in a relaxed and supportive setting. In 2023, we welcomed 33 young people onto campus for ten participant led sessions focused on developing the skills and confidence participants need for university and beyond, including budgeting and wellbeing.

84%

Strongly agreed that they would like to go to university after attending Discovery

69%

Learned new skills from Discovery sessions

64%

Participants' confidence in their potential to go to university before Discovery

85%

Participants' confidence in their potential to go to university after Discovery



Discovery helped me prepare for university by equipping me with the valuable knowledge of every second counts and to work hard but at a pace and from there, I have been able to manage myself better during good times and bad - A real skill to learn when entering the world of academia and work.

Kyle, Discovery participant

Such a useful project for both my daughter and me... Discovery is really helping us prepare.

Discovery parent

Having access to the Discovery project has been invaluable for us. It's been really welcoming and reassuring to have some graduated entry to the site, so... excellent!

Discovery parent



Five previous Discovery participants joined Cardiff University in 2023.

Discovery Summer School

In July 2023, 19 young people completed the Discovery Summer School. The Summer School built practical skills with activities replicating university life. Participants created meal plans, did a food shop, and then cooked their own meals in university halls with student ambassadors and flatmates. The Summer School ended with a 'Graduate Fayre', which was attended by organisations including: National Autistic Society Cymru and Autism Wales.



My favourite part of Discovery was experiencing student life because I feel more ready for university now and am reassured that I can do well there.

Sai, Discovery Summer School participant

I am more comfortable with the idea of going to university and the social aspect of university life is less daunting.

Hannah, Discovery Summer School participant



I understand what student life would be like at Cardiff University

before **50%** | after **94%**

I feel more prepared to live independently following the summer school

72%

The summer school has given me a positive experience of university life

83%

I am worried about fitting in at university

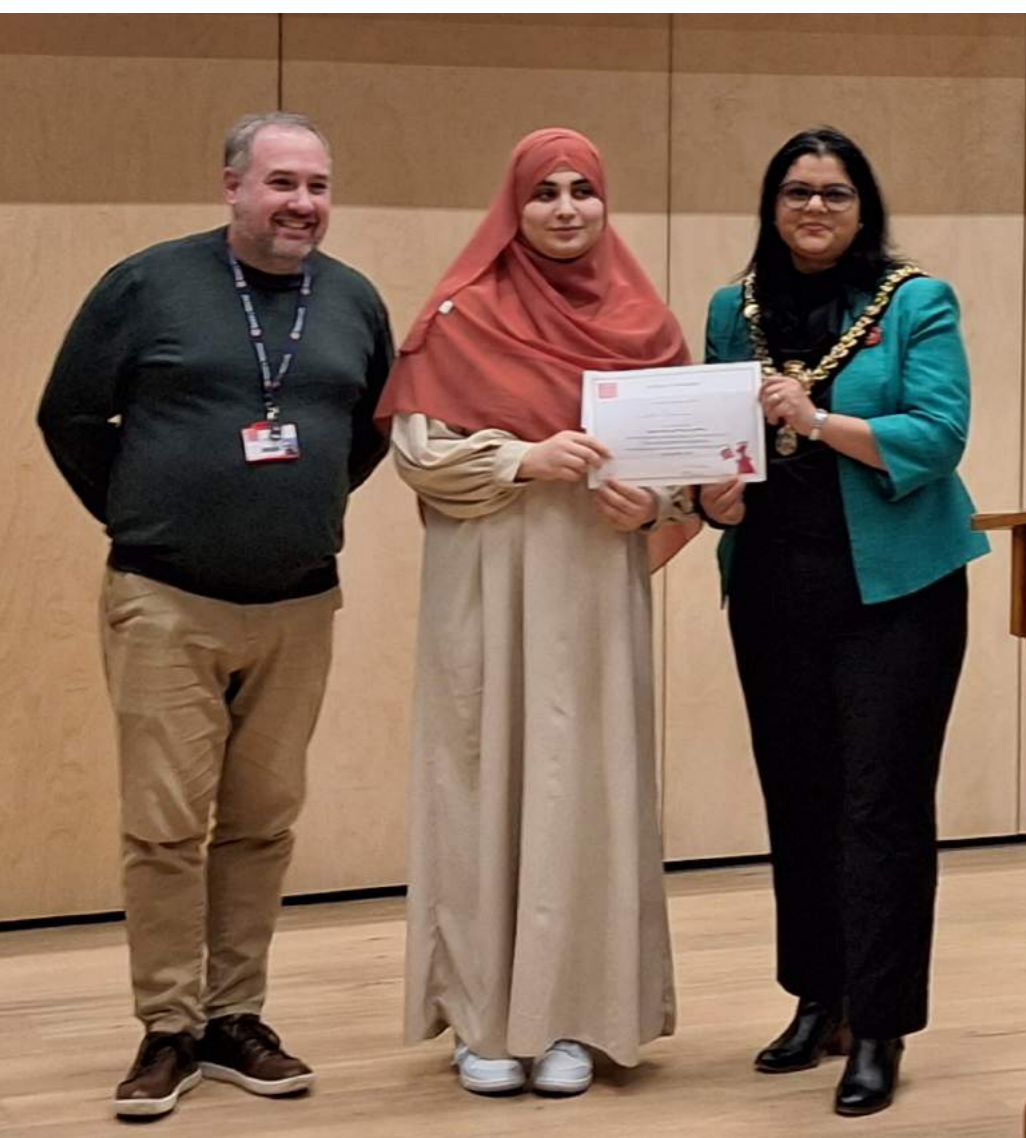
before **50%** | after **28%**

Engage

Work Experience Project

This project provides an opportunity for Year 12 pupils to learn about the diversity of jobs at Cardiff University.

During Autumn half term, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic pupils from Fitzalan and Cathays High Schools undertook placements in departments including Library Services, Student Futures and the School of Computer Science.



In the future, I hope to be studying medicine at Cardiff University and aspire to graduate as a doctor. I hope to continue seeing myself as a successful, polite and caring person.

2023 Engage participant

I'm now thinking about doing my masters in cyber security instead of thermodynamics.

2023 Engage participant

I think it's a great initiative to introduce more young people from ethnic minority communities locally to Cardiff University and for them to feel there is a place for them here. I think there is also a lot of scope to learn from young people and their perspectives that we can apply to our work

2023 Engage mentor



Parent Power



“As a father who was not encouraged to go to university, I am absolutely amazed by this opportunity for my son, especially because he's very interested in education and going further into university.”

Cardiff Parent Power, run in partnership with the [Brilliant Club](#), empowers parents to ensure their children achieve their potential through the development of community organising skills and providing advice and guidance on higher education.

We work with parents/carers of children attending Fitzalan High School, Cardiff West Community High School, Cathays High School and Willows High School.

Parent Power has been amazing. It has given me the confidence to ask the questions I've always wanted answered but have been too nervous to ask. The team have really put us at ease and have listened to us and nudged us in the right direction to make changes for the challenges we face. I really feel like I'm part of a community of like-minded individuals who all just want to support their children to access higher education.



Reaching Wider

The South-East Wales Reaching Wider Partnership is a collaborative programme led by delivery teams at the University of South Wales, Cardiff Metropolitan University and Cardiff University.

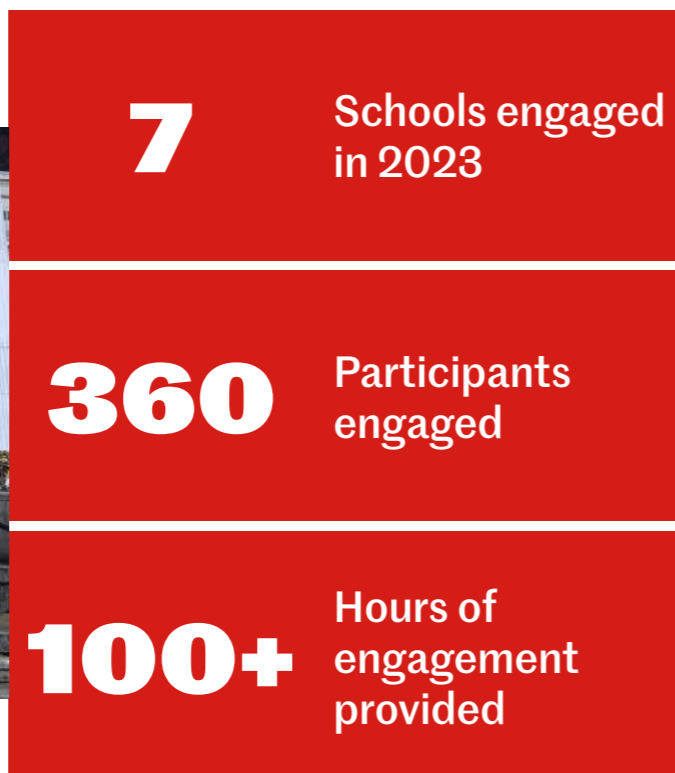
Adults

Our adult learner programme raises the educational aspirations of adults 21 and over with no level four qualifications. We deliver courses covering a range of subjects, in collaboration with community partners and Cardiff University's Lifelong Learning team. Learners are also given access to information, advice, and guidance sessions. In 2023, over 300 hours of learning were provided to 170 adult learners, with content ranging from language interpreting and counselling skills to child development.

Young people

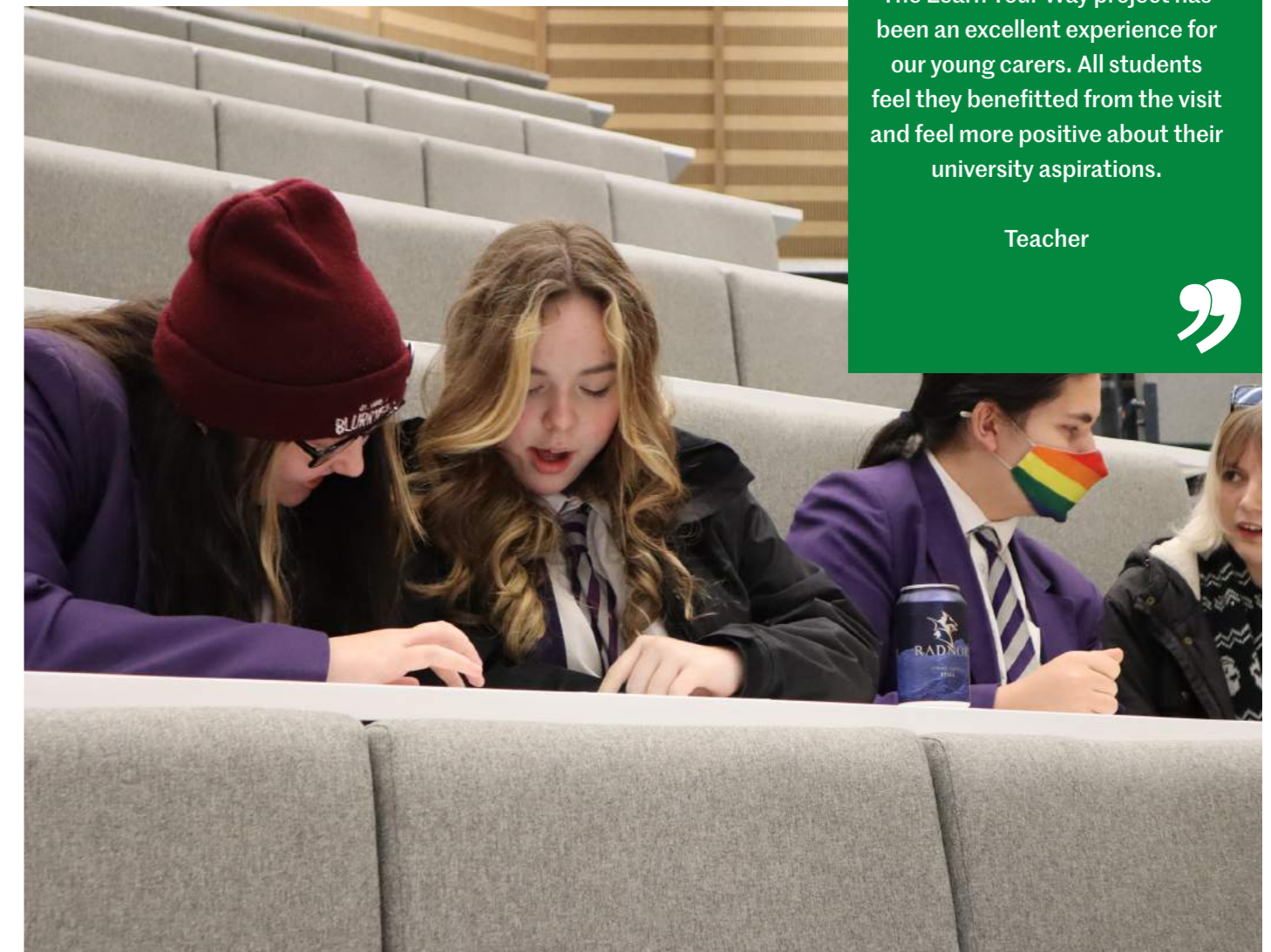
'Future Me' is a series of interactive workshops for pupils in key stages 3-5. Participants visit campus, to experience university life and meet current students.

'Pathways to Success' provides subject specific workshops in collaboration with academic schools and industry professionals. In 2023, activities were delivered with support from the Schools of Modern Languages, Welsh, Journalism and Communications; and S4C.



Priority Groups

Reaching Wider's Priority Groups include care experienced young people and young people who have caring responsibilities. 'Learn Your Way' introduces these young people to higher education and role models with similar lived experience. In 2023, we worked with 7 schools and community groups to deliver 68 sessions to 116 young carers and care experienced young people.



Speaking to students who are young carers also made me realise I could go to uni too.

Learn Your Way participant

The Learn Your Way project has been an excellent experience for our young carers. All students feel they benefitted from the visit and feel more positive about their university aspirations.

Teacher



Small Grants Scheme

This project provides funding to support Cardiff University researchers to develop and pilot key stages 3 and 4 activities, allowing them to use their research to engage and inspire the next generation.

Five grants were awarded to researchers in the Schools of Bioscience, Medicine, Law and Politics, Physics, and Social Science. The resulting activities engaged over 1,500 pupils in 12 schools and at the National Eisteddfod.

Activities included a Space Academy and a criminal law workshop.



School Governors Network

115 Cardiff University staff currently serve as school governors and are members of the School Governors Network. Collectively in 2023 they volunteered 1,320 days as Governors.

School category	Cardiff University staff serving as governors
Primary	69
Community	1
Secondary	36
College	2
Academy	4
Other	3
Total	115

School Governors Small Grants Scheme

In 2023, ten schools, where Cardiff University staff serve as school governors, each received £500 to fund activities that would benefit pupils with WP characteristics.

The scheme funded initiatives that supported:

- School leadership and management
- Staff and/or pupil wellbeing
- Introduction of the new curriculum for Wales
- Recovery from educational disruption and closing the attainment gap
- Development of new skills and support for career aspirations
- School-specific issues which impact teaching and learning



HE Roadshow

The HE Roadshow is a partnership between Cardiff University and Cardiff Metropolitan University.

The Roadshow tours secondary schools in Wales, to support pupils in years 9, 10 and 11 to make informed choices about their future. In 2023, the roadshow included sessions on study and revision skills, managing mental health and university budgeting. Participants visited campus on University Inspiration Days, to experience life as a student through campus tours and scavenger hunts.



54

Sessions delivered

19

Schools participated

3000

Pupils engaged



Contextual admissions policy

Our contextual admissions policy takes into consideration an applicant's individual circumstances when reviewing their application and will often result in applicants receiving a reduced offer.

For example, a grade range of ABB-BBB could result in a contextual offer of BBB. Under the policy, young people who have engaged with WP programmes in the two years before they apply will receive the same consideration as a contextual applicant.

Open Days

Cardiff University's WP team and Together at Cardiff staff provide information drop ins, quiet spaces and one-to-ones for Open Day attendees who have engaged with WP programmes.

One to ones with the Together at Cardiff Officer are provided for sanctuary seekers, care experienced learners, young carers and estranged young people.

WP in academic schools

This section highlights the excellent WP work being conducted by colleagues in Cardiff University's academic schools.

MFL Mentoring

MFL Mentoring is a Welsh Government funded project that encourages young people to see the value and benefits that languages can bring to their lives. We train university students to become language and culture mentors. Our mentors work with learners in years 8 and 9 who have previously indicated that they are disinclined towards languages. Their role is to inspire a love for language learning and intercultural curiosity.

Since 2015, the project has worked with 172 secondary schools across Wales, approximately 20,000 learners and around 600 university students. In 2022-23, 42% of mentees opted to study a GCSE language, compared to a national average of 13%. In 2023-24, the project will be working with 122 secondary schools, reaching approximately 66% of all secondary schools in Wales. Feel free to follow MFL Mentoring and to see more about the great work our mentors do on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). We also have a monthly newsletter that you can sign up to [here](#).



Love Reading Mentoring

'Love Reading Mentoring', a 1-year pilot project funded by Welsh Government and delivered in partnership with Bangor University, aims to inspire learners aged 9-11 to find their own love of reading, by placing university student mentors in primary schools to deliver exciting and engaging literacy activities to small groups. 'Love Reading Mentoring' was delivered in 12 primary schools to over 200 learners. At the start of the project, learners' reading attitudes were surveyed revealing that 22% of respondents never read outside of school, while only 13% read once a week. It is hoped that the mentoring project and students' encouraging attitudes will increase learners' motivation and confidence to read for pleasure.



I enjoyed learning about how language goes so much deeper than just words we speak and it links to many cultural things.

2023 MFL mentee

I managed to highlight the importance of Welsh and English as languages . . . which several of the mentees had never really thought about before. Looking forward to going back!

2023 MFL student mentor

It was an absolute pleasure working with [our mentor] this year, she was a big hit with the pupils too, so inspirational.

2023 class teacher



The mentees seemed really excited about the project. They were particularly eager to name their reading friends and talk about the books they are reading at the moment in school. Mostly they were excited to learn more about me and my time at university.

2023 Love Reading mentor



Physics Mentoring

The School of Physics and Astronomy runs 'Physics Mentoring', funded by Welsh Government and in partnership with Aberystwyth, Bangor, Swansea and Wrexham Universities and the University of South Wales.

We believe that physics is relevant to all lives and should be available to all who wish to engage with it.

We train university students to become Physics Mentors to secondary school pupils, to enthuse pupils about physics by exploring its relevance to daily life and the skills they can develop from a post-16 physics qualification.



Since the project's inception in 2019, we have trained 268 mentors, and welcomed 28 schools in the Autumn 2023 cycle.



PACE project

Promoting Academic and Community Excellence (PACE) was established in 2018 to inspire Cardiff pupils in years 9, 10 and 11 to consider University and, in 2023, over 90 pupils joined the project. PACE runs weekly sessions to enhance the science curriculum and culminates with a Summer School where pupils undertake three medical scenarios including a medical emergency. Pupils say they have enjoyed "learning with friends" and "meeting university students and learning about the world of medicine".



Student Ambassadors and Interns

Student Ambassadors play an integral role in our programmes by providing young people with role models who have similar interests and lived experiences.

Student Ambassadors share insight into what being a Cardiff University student is like, to ensure programme participants can make informed decisions about their futures.

Being a Student Ambassador provides current students with the opportunity to build employability skills, including teamwork, communication and leadership skills.

In 2023, the WP team employed 143 Student Ambassadors on our programmes.



Working on the projects has allowed me to develop my leadership skills and confidence through meeting so many different people, and the work can be so fun. Working on the summer schools was such an insightful experience; I found them rewarding because the wide range of activities and sessions on offer meant that participants could experience and learn lots and I saw participants become more confident. I have many favourite memories of the programmes, but a notable one is when we had a cooking task on the Discovery Project. It was heartwarming to see everyone work together.

Holly, 2023 Student Ambassador



Being a student ambassador has helped to develop my character and skills in many ways. I have always enjoyed interacting with people, but this role has helped me escape my comfort zone. I am now more flexible in my approach to tasks in life as I have learnt that things will not always go to plan.

During summer school, we had a session that was highly anticipated get cancelled. Instead of just leaving it be, I had the opportunity to give the students an interactive session, which required quick decision making and ideas on the spot, leading a team to help provide this. This increased my confidence in knowing that even if the unpredictable happens, I can still figure my way out of it.

I also learnt that it really is all about taking a moment to reflect and being open to trying new things, something I continue to implement in my life.

Rabaa, 2023 Student Ambassador



Being an ambassador for the WP team has been an absolute privilege and one of my overall university experience highlights. WP ambassadorship has allowed me to build my communication and leadership skills all of which have transferred over to my clinical work as a trainee radiographer.

Safa, 2023 Student Ambassador





Through WP, I have met a diverse range of young people who need that extra support to access higher education. Whether it is tackling myths about universities, sharing my passion for my course, or working through hypothetical problems that a student might face, I enjoy seeing young people's confidence and aspirations grow. Having been in their position once, it is an incredibly satisfying and varied job.

Praveena, 2023 Student Ambassador



Working on these programmes has been an incredibly rewarding experience for me, especially when I see students, who might otherwise have been overlooked, gaining access to higher education and pursuing their dreams. This experience has not only reaffirms my belief in the power of education as a great equaliser but also inspired me to continue working towards a more inclusive society.

Darshan, 2023 Student Ambassador



Interns

This year the WP team welcomed a student intern from the School of Social Science. Every year, social science students complete a 'real world' module, where they apply knowledge and skills in real world contexts.



Not only did I thoroughly enjoy undertaking this Research and Evaluation internship with the wonderful team, it also provided me with valuable experiences to develop some key transferable skills for my university studies.

Steve, 2023 Research and Evaluation Intern



Through this internship, I gained confidence, a better ability to adapt to quickly changing situations and an increased appreciation for the incredible work the department does. It was very fulfilling to work with a wide range of people throughout the month and to contribute to the work of the summer schools.

Manu, 2023 Social Media Intern



Upcoming developments

In 2024 the WP team will introduce new activities to support our priority groups.

Confident Futures

This project will support care experienced, estranged, adopted young people and young adult carers. Support will be offered to young people in their colleges and schools and followed up with campus visits.

Mature Learners

The WP team will support the mature student induction and work across the University to ensure our mature learners enjoy a sense of community.

Military Experienced

In 2024 we will offer Military Experienced learners a campus visit, and work with charities and organisations to encourage those returning from duty to return to education.

WP Network

In 2024 we will relaunch the WP Network to collaborate with and support colleagues delivering WP activity across the university. We will explore the appetite for such a network by collaborating with Civic Mission team and joining the Cardiff University Engagement Network working group.



Reflection

2023 has been a hugely successful year for WP at Cardiff University. We have expanded our activity to include more subject areas and priority groups.

We have happily returned to in-person delivery, to allow our participants to enjoy life on campus; whilst retaining the benefits of some online delivery. Moving forward, we look to improve our evaluation, assessment of impact and targeting; to ensure our activity best supports those groups most in need of our help.



