

YORJOURNEY IMPACT EVALUATION 2025

ACCESS & OUTREACH TEAM, SEPTEMBER 2026

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Executive summary

This report evaluates the impact of the 2025 YorJourney programme in supporting students from underrepresented backgrounds in transitioning from post-16 study to university.

The evaluation uses survey responses from participants before and after participating in YorJourney. The findings show that after participating in YorJourney, there is a statistically significant increase in participants' knowledge of academic and mental health support structures at the University of York, confidence in seeking academic support, and prioritising wellbeing, helping students transition more smoothly into university life post-enrollment.

Programme overview & background

[YorJourney](#) is an online transitional programme established in 2020, and designed to support eligible University of York / Hull York Medical School offer holders to successfully transition from post-16 study to university ([see eligibility](#)). Additionally, successful completion of the YorJourney programme also allows participants to 'unlock' their alternative offer. The alternative offer is up to 3 grades below the standard offer for the relevant course at the University of York or the Hull York Medical School*.

Eligibility

All YorJourney participants have taken part in one of the following post-16 widening participation programmes, and are typically in Year 13 (17-18 years old); [Next Step York](#), [Black Access](#), Pathways to Medicine (HYMS) or [York Experience Summer School \(YESS\)](#) programme (see [Appendix C](#) for further demographic information).

To be eligible for the YorJourney programme, participants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Have successfully completed one of the eligible programmes named above (including passing any required credit scores (points acquired for engagement in their substantive post-16 programme) to progress onto the second year of the programme), AND:
 - Accepted an offer to study **any course** at the **University of York** as their **firm** or **insurance** choice
 - **OR** accepted an offer to study **Medicine** at the **Hull York Medical School** as their **firm** choice
 - **OR** accepted an offer to study Medicine with a Gateway Year at the Hull York Medical School.
NB. There is no requirement for these students to complete the YorJourney programme, it is entirely optional, as the alternative offer does not apply to the Gateway Year.

**available for 2 admissions cycles after completion of the relevant post-16 programme*

YorJourney participants are invited to take part in a series of online sessions over a 2 week period, and as a minimum must attend at least one session from each of the following three strands (sessions are 60 minutes in length, with the exception of Academic Skills Session 1 which is up to 90 minutes):

- Myth Busting
- Academic Skills
- Wellbeing

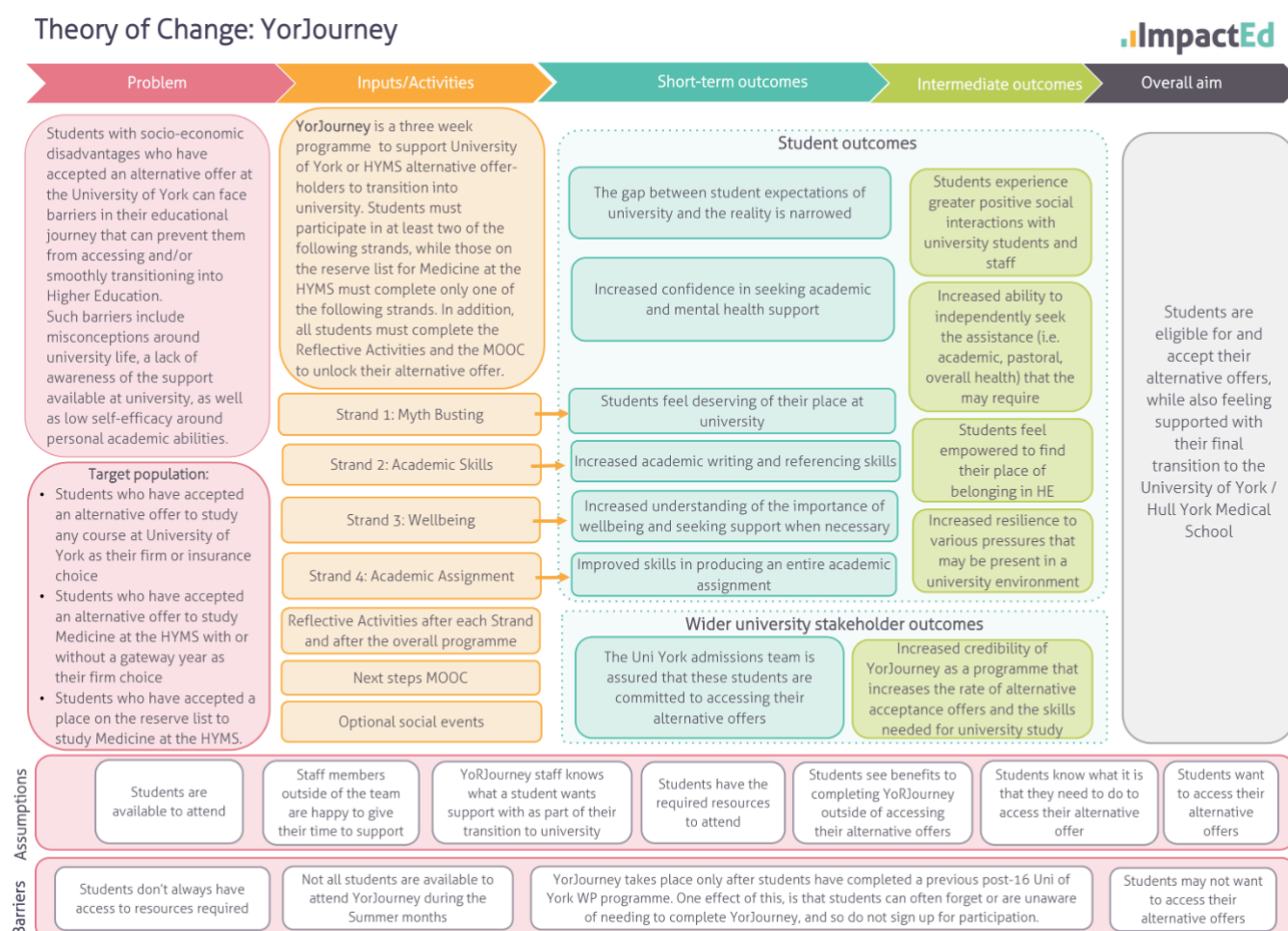
The Academic Assignment (1500 word essay based on a question of choice provided by academic departments, and reviewed by Graduate Teaching Assistants) is offered as an additional optional opportunity for participants to complete. Participants are given a minimum of 3 weeks to complete the Academic Assignment. Participants could also access the '[Next Steps to University](#)' MOOC (online course), which explores what higher education is all about and tips for making the most of university life and study. Participants can access the MOOC from the point of completing the welcome survey up until enrollment, however recorded completion of the MOOC (if applicable) is required by the end of the third week of YorJourney.

Where participants indicate that they are unable to attend the minimum session requirements, alternative provisions are put in place:

- **On demand pathway** - student indicates they cannot attend a min. of 1 session from two or more strands
 - Alternative pathway offered - complete the Academic Assignment, watch the Academic Skills recording, complete the Next Steps to University MOOC
- **Hybrid pathway** - student indicates they cannot attend a min. of 1 session for one of the strands
 - Student is offered the MOOC to complete in lieu of one of the strands

The basis for YorJourney is to provide a clear understanding of university life, build confidence and self-efficacy in personal academic abilities, and maximise awareness of the support available at university, in order to support the smooth transition from post-16 study. The Theory of Change (Figure 1 - an accessible version is available in [Appendix A](#)) underpins the programme and evaluation framework (available in [Appendix B](#)), and was developed in collaboration with [ImpactEd](#).

Figure 1: YorJourney Theory of Change



It should be noted that since the Theory of Change was initially created, the delivery of the YorJourney programme has developed. Key changes to the inputs / activities are as follows:

- **Students must participate in strands 1-3 rather than 2 of the 4 strands originally listed** - this reduced the number of sessions students need to attend in order to access their alternative offer, whilst simultaneously providing a greater breadth of information and guidance that can support their transition into university life.

- **Students complete reflective activities related to the individual strands at the same time as their reflection on the overall programme** - this reduces the burden on participants to complete multiple surveys, by combining this into 1 singular reflective survey
- **Removal of optional social events** - previous years showed lower levels of engagement in this element. Participants are still able to engage with their peers during live sessions.

Fundamentally, YorJourney continues to operate under the rationale that the supportive transition into university life can also contribute positively towards students accepting their place at university, and continuation. This rationale is based on existing research around supporting different student groups, and is broken down into 4 key interconnected areas:

- **Engaging with peers, current university students and staff members prior to starting university.** These interactions can “provide information, develop realistic expectations and hone academic skills” ([Thomas, 2012](#)), whilst also fostering a students’ sense of belonging. This sense of belonging is especially important for first generation students who “may lack the cultural capital of their on-going generation peers” (Pedler et al, 2022).
- **Academic Skills – preparing students for academic study at a university level.** The jump from post-16 study to university is often underestimated by students, and “learning to learn” is a key aspect of students’ transition ([Wingate, 2007](#)) as they switch to more independent learning.
- **Wellbeing - increasing awareness of, and confidence in accessing, the range of support systems in place at university, alongside developing coping strategies.** We know that “young people from higher socio-economic backgrounds may experience fewer external pressures or unexpected challenges whilst studying than young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds; they may also have access to greater support” ([Crawford, 2014](#)).
- **Mythbusting - desmystifying misconceptions, and narrowing the gap between what many first year students anticipate their university experience to look like versus the reality of what their student experience could be.** In this context, “narrowing the gap” refers to participants gaining a more accurate view of university life without comment on whether what they anticipate versus the reality is an increase or lowering of expectations. Pre-entry students have difficulty envisaging university life and accurately predicting their student experience, meaning developing their “student identity” can be beneficial to their successful transition to higher education ([Briggs et al. 2012](#)). Additionally, university students have increasingly reported mixed experiences of their university experience, where their expectations have not been met in some areas ([Neves & Hillman, HEPI 2018](#)).

More broadly, we know that a strong link exists between a student’s sense of belonging and their success at university ([Pearson & WonkHE, 2022](#)), and that there is a compelling case for belonging being critical to student retention and success ([Thomas, 2012](#)).

Data reporting notice

Student numbers used throughout this document are being reported under HESA rounding guidelines to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. As such, all data numbers are rounded to the nearest 5. Any category numbers reported as 0 do represent some participants; categories with no students are not reported on.

Participant Information

All student numbers in this report are rounded to the nearest 5 to protect students’ identities. The participant information, session attendance and pass rate sections represent the full cohort, whilst the analysis of survey responses only represents those who have consented for their responses to be used for evaluation purposes in line with our ethics consent.

A total of 85 students from a range of underrepresented backgrounds (see [Appendix C](#)) signed up to take part in YorJourney, out of an eligible cohort of 95.

Figure 2: YorJourney Participants by post-16 programme

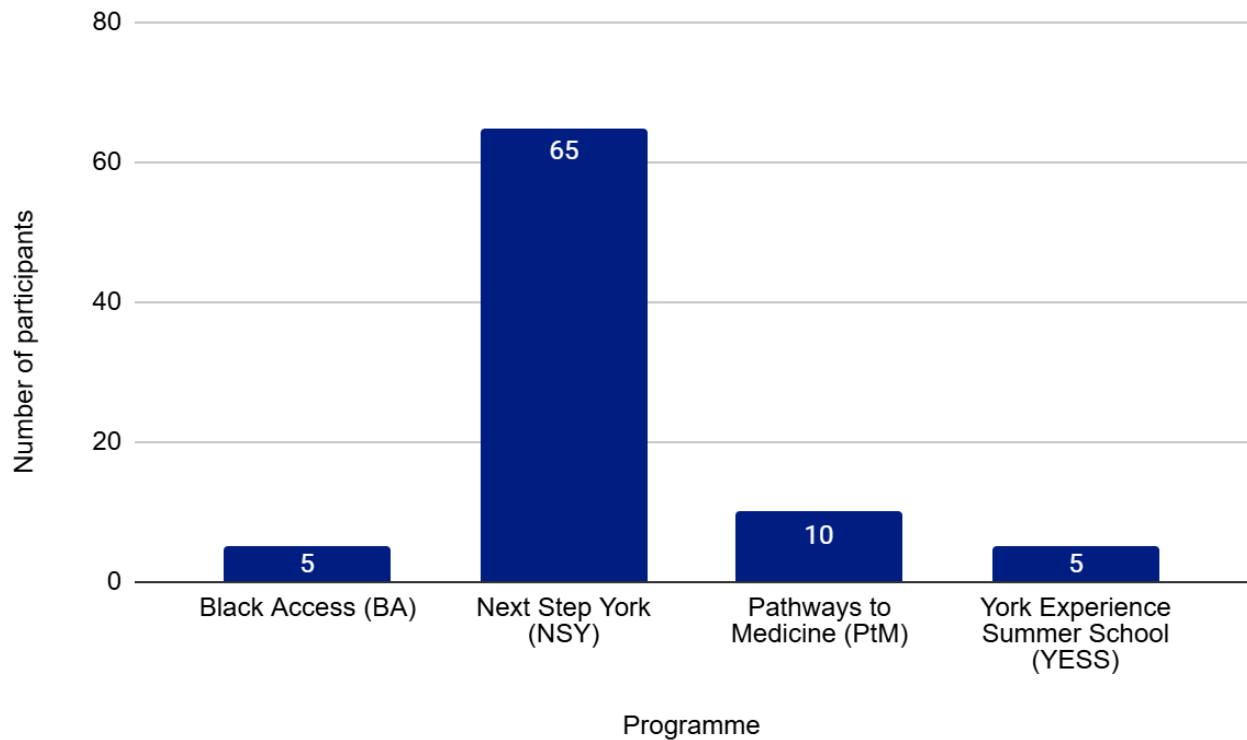
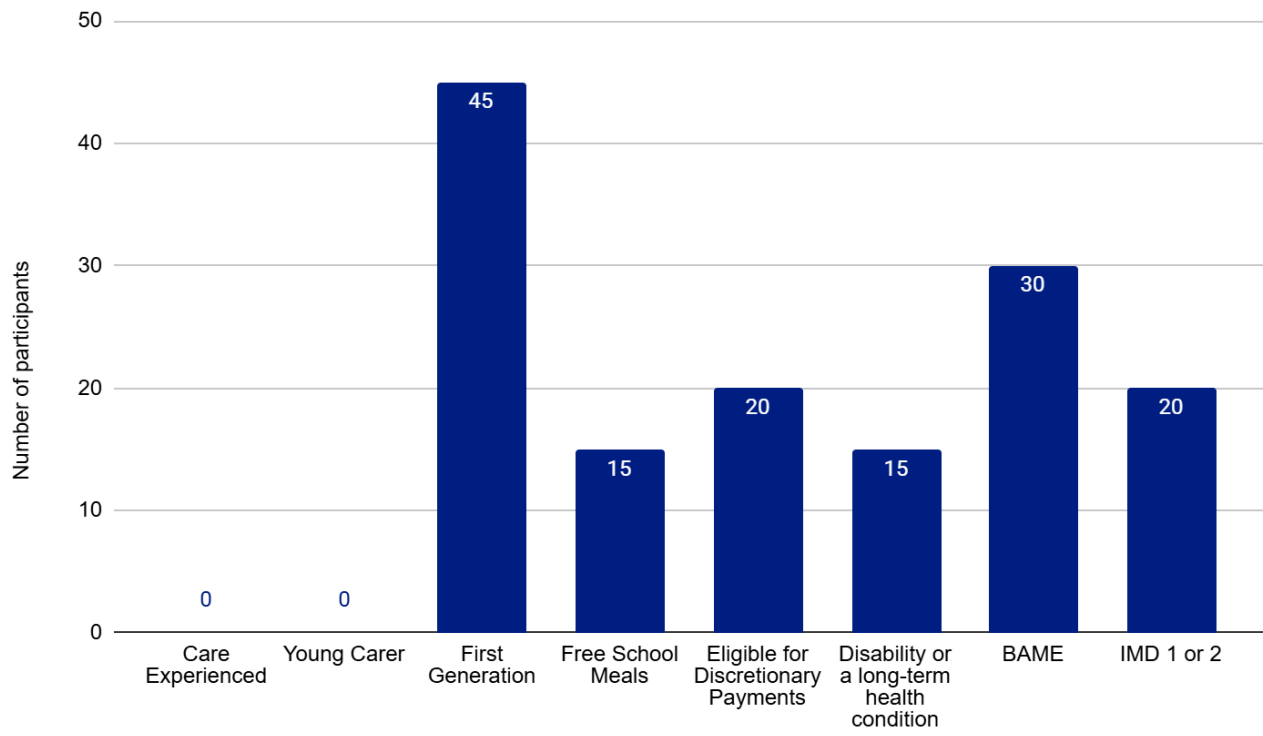


Figure 3: YorJourney Participants by demographic data

A key for student groups is included in [Appendix C](#).



Session attendance rates

Table 1 below shows the different sessions available for participants of the YorJourney programme to attend within each strand, as well as the attendance rates. Each session within the YorJourney strands is distinct, although there may be some overlap in themes. Table 2 shows the number and percentage of participants who completed and passed YorJourney, thus 'unlocking' their alternative offer for the University of York.

Table 1: YorJourney session per strand and their attendance rates

	Mythbusting	Session content	Number Attended	Percentage
	Session 1	Explores common misconceptions about academic life at university	55	64.7%
	Session 2	Explores common misconceptions about socialising at university, and freshers	35	41.2%
	Both sessions	-	15	17.6%
	Wellbeing	Session content	Number Attended	Percentage
	Session 1	Explores selfcare and strategies to develop good coping mechanisms	55	64.7%
	Session 2	Explores the range of support services at the University of York / HYMS, and how to access these	30	35.3%
	Both sessions	-	10	11.8%
	Academic Skills	Session content	Number Attended	Percentage
	Session 1	Subject specific online seminars, for students to practice participating in a university level session	50	58.8%
	Session 2	Explores how to write academically at university, from note-taking and essay structure, to referencing	45	52.9%
	Both sessions	-	15	17.6%
	All live sessions	Session content	Number Attended	Percentage
	All sessions		5	5.9%
	MOOC	Session content	Number Completed	Percentage

	Completed the Next Steps to University MOOC	Explores what higher education is all about, tips for making the most of your university life and study.	10	11.8%
	Academic Assignment	Session content	Number Completed	Percentage
	Submitted 1500 word essay	An academic piece of writing related to their intended course of study. Participants are provided with specific feedback from academic members of staff.	15	17.6%

YorJourney pass rate

Table 2: Number and percentage of participants who completed YorJourney

	YorJourney Completion	Number who completed / passed	Percentage
	Completed / pass	80	94.1%

Research consent

To conduct the YorJourney impact evaluation research, we gained explicit consent from participants, and where appropriate, due to the age of participants, we also gained consent from their parent, carer or guardian. All parties were instructed that participation in the evaluation research was optional, and not an essential requirement of participating in YorJourney and subsequently accessing the alternative offer.

Research aims

The impact evaluation aims to:

1. Explore if participants reported that YorJourney supported their transition to the University of York/ Hull York Medical School
2. Explore how participants reported the ways that YorJourney supported their transition to the University of York/ Hull York Medical School

Hypotheses

The YorJourney team predicted the following outcomes in line with the student outcomes referenced in the [Theory of Change](#):

Main hypothesis: The YorJourney programme supported students in their final transition to the University of York or Hull York Medical School

- *Transition refers to a sense of belonging, academic preparedness and confidence in seeking support.*

Sub-hypotheses:

- **1.** Students who completed YorJourney are more likely to feel like they belong at university, both academically and socially
- **2.** Students who completed YorJourney are more likely to feel prepared for the academic rigour of university and to know where to seek support at the University of York
- **3.** Students who completed YorJourney would be more likely to feel confident to seek mental health support at university if they need it, and specifically know the mechanisms of doing so at the University of York

Data collection & methods

To assess the effectiveness of YorJourney, participants were invited to take part in the YorJourney Impact Evaluation. This research, approved by the University of York's Professional Services Ethics Committee, used a repeated-measures design. Participants were asked to complete a survey prior to participating in YorJourney (pre-survey), and immediately after YorJourney (post-survey). Participants who subsequently went on to enrol at the University of York or the Hull York Medical School, were invited to complete a final survey (long-post survey) during their first term.

The YorJourney team used validated scales for confidence, belonging, and knowledge (see [Appendix B](#)). Where statements are taken from the TASO ASQ scale, the TASO validated scale weighting has been applied for each participants' scores.

The custom survey question responses (see [Appendix B](#)) were collected using a 5-point Likert scale, before being converted into numerical values for quantitative analysis (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) for each participant at each data collection point. 'Prefer not to say' responses were coded as 0 and excluded from the mean and percentage calculations, therefore the reported figures only reflect active sentiment.

60 students completed the pre survey and 55 completed the post survey. The data was cleaned, matched and analysed to assess the impact of the programme on each outcome. A score for the four outcomes were calculated; the 'Confidence and Mental Health' (C&MH) outcome scale and the 'Wellbeing' scale contained six and four questions respectively and the mean was used for the outcome score. The scales from the TASO ASQ, 'Belonging' and 'Cognitive Strategies' (CS) had three and four questions respectively, and the outcome scores were calculated using the ASQ weighted scoring spreadsheet. After cleaning, there were 55 full responses and scores for C&MH, Wellbeing and Cognitive Strategies and 50 full responses for belonging.

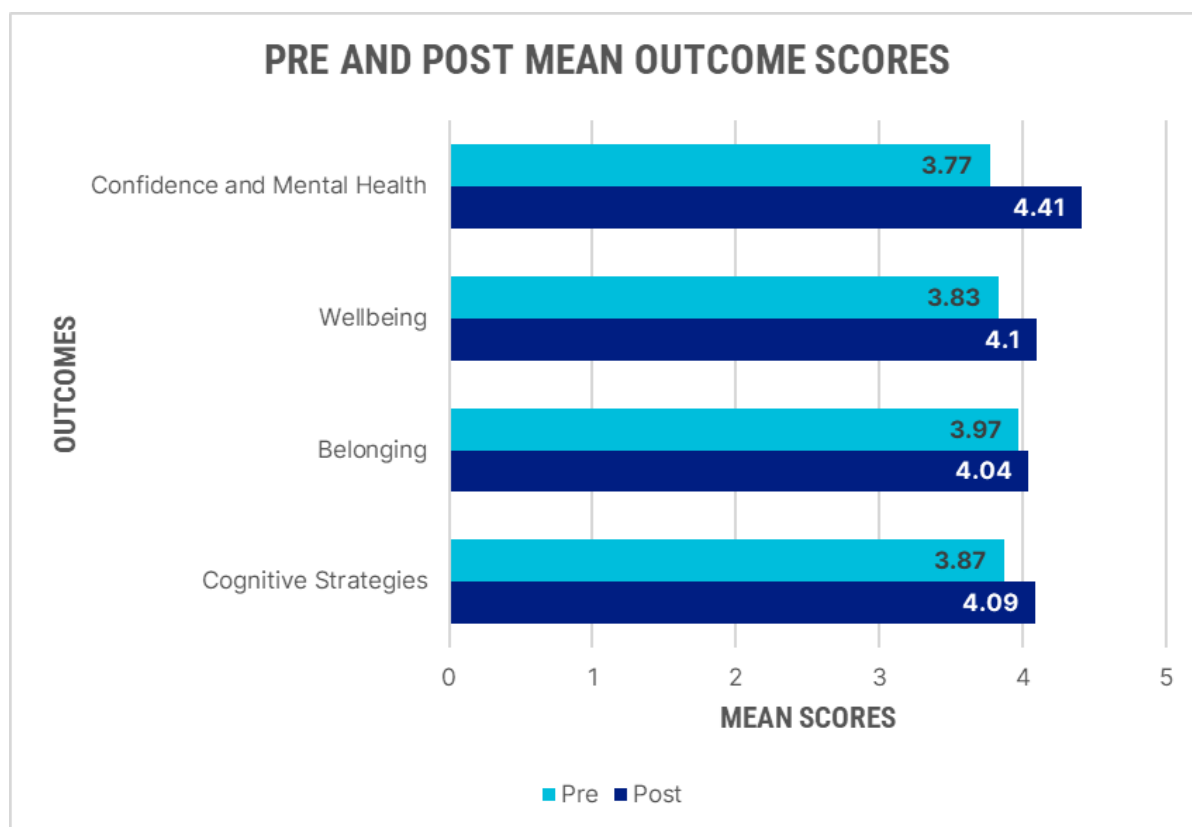
Additionally, responses were matched over time, allowing us to consider students' responses against the sessions they had attended. Students were also asked to share their views on how their participation on YorJourney had influenced them. Due to the limited number of responses to the long-post survey, we are unable to share the statistical findings from that data collection point in this report. Similarly, the long post-survey does not collect any free text responses, so we are unable to identify any qualitative themes from that data collection point.

In summary, the findings from this report focus on the pre survey & post survey responses from participants only; before participating in YorJourney, and immediately after participating in YorJourney.

Findings & Analysis

The responses to the statements are summarised in Figure 4 below. Figure 4 shows the average mean score in relation to each outcome, before and after taking part in YorJourney. Where statements are taken from the TASO ASQ scale ([see appendix B](#)), the TASO validated scale weighting has been applied for each participants' scores, and then the mean of these scores is shown in the graph.

Figure 4: YorJourney Pre & Post Mean Outcomes



The impact evaluation found that the mean score for each statement and each outcome increased at each data collection point. The pre and post outcome scores were tested for normality. 'Confidence and Mental Health', 'Wellbeing' and 'Belonging' scores were not normally distributed and therefore required a Wilcoxon signed-rank test to determine whether the increases in scores were statistically significant. 'Cognitive Strategies' scores were normally distributed, and therefore, a paired samples t-test was used. For all tests, statistical significance was determined using a threshold of $p < 0.05$, ensuring a 95% confidence level that observed improvements were related to the intervention rather than chance.

- The Wilcoxon signed-rank test conducted on the pre and post '**Confidence and Mental Health**' scores (n=55) found a **statistically significant increase** at the 0.1% level ($Z = -5.694, p < 0.001$).
- There was a **statistically significant increase** in '**Wellbeing**' between the pre and post surveys ($Z = -2.937, p < 0.001$).
- At this time no statistically significant increase was found for **belonging** ($Z = -0.856, p = 0.392$), despite the increase in scores before and after YorJourney (n=50).
- The paired samples t-test found that the difference in students' **cognitive strategy** scores at the pre (M = 3.87, SD = 0.56) and post (M = 4.09, SD = 0.49) surveys was **statistically significant**; $t(54) = -2.903, p = 0.003$.

We were also interested in looking at whether attendance at a particular session in each strand, or participation in the Academic Assignment or 'Next Steps to University' MOOC influenced participants' responses to the statements. To understand this we broke down the average mean score for each outcome, split by attendees and non-attendees for each session. Where there is a positive lift in the mean average score, this lift has been highlighted in green in [Table 3](#).

Table 3: Average Mean Scores by Attendance

	Wellbeing Event 1 - Selfcare Event 2 - Support at York					
	Mean Score for Event 1 attendees	Mean Score for Event 1 non- attendees	Lift	Mean Score for Event 2 attendees	Mean Score for Event 2 non- attendees	Lift
Number of students	35	20	-	25	30	-
Confidence and Mental Health	4.33	4.56	-0.24	4.63	4.22	0.4
Wellbeing	4.11	4.06	0.06	4.15	4.05	0.1
Belonging	4.06	3.94	0.12	3.98	4.06	-0.09
Cognitive Strategies	4.08	4.11	-0.03	4.14	4.05	0.09

	Mythbusting Event 3 - Fact of Faculty Fiction Event 4 - Fact of Freshers Fiction					
	Mean Score for Event 3 attendees	Mean Score for Event 3 non- attendees	Lift	Mean Score for Event 4 attendees	Mean Score for Event 4 non- attendees	Lift
	37	20	-	25	30	-
	4.31	4.60	-0.29	4.61	4.23	0.38
	4.16	3.96	0.2	4.10	4.09	0.01
	3.99	4.10	-0.11	3.97	4.06	-0.09
	4.03	4.23	-0.21	4.14	4.05	0.09

	Academic Skills Event 5 - Academic Seminar Event 6 - Referencing and Writing					
	Mean Score for Event 5 attendees	Mean Score for Event 5 non- attendees	Lift	Mean Score for Event 6 attendees	Mean Score for Event 6 non- attendees	Lift
Number of students	35	20	-	30	25	-
Confidence and Mental Health	4.36	4.48	-0.12	4.47	4.33	0.14
Wellbeing	4.11	4.08	0.03	4.13	4.06	0.07
Belonging	3.99	4.07	-0.07	4.08	3.96	0.12
Cognitive Strategies	4.07	4.13	-0.06	4.04	4.15	-0.12

Academic Assignment			Next Steps to University MOOC		
Mean Score for Event 7 attendees	Mean Score for Event 7 non- attendees	Lift	Mean Score for Event 8 attendees	Mean Score for Event 8 non- attendees	Lift
10	45	-	5	50	-
4.24	4.45	-0.2	4.37	4.41	-0.04
4.18	4.07	0.11	3.60	4.15	-0.54
4.22	3.98	0.24	4.15	4.01	0.14
4.10	4.09	0.01	4.16	4.09	0.08

We can see from this breakdown that there are differences in the outcomes between attending different sessions in the strand, with participants who attended the following sessions, respectively, reporting on average more positively in 3 of the 4 outcomes than those who did not attend:

- Support at York
- Fact or Freshers Fiction
- Referencing & Writing

This suggests that participants felt more confident and/or knowledgeable after these sessions, which in turn may indicate that they had pre-existing concerns which were addressed in those sessions. We may also consider that it is simply an improvement in whatever baseline they started with.

We can also see that those who completed the Academic Assignment on average score more positively in 3 of the 4 outcomes, than those who did not. Most interestingly, the largest positive difference was within the "Belonging" outcome.

Those that completed the 'Next Steps to University' MOOC also scored more positively on average in 2 of the 4 outcomes, than those who did not.

Additional qualitative information

Further to the evaluation questions, we asked participants to reflect on their experience of YorJourney and provide free text responses. These free text responses were subsequently coded to identify patterns or themes. A full breakdown of the patterns or themes can be found in tables 4, 5 & 6, but in summary across the whole programme, the most prominent pattern or themes were:

1. Positive change between a student's expectations of university before and after taking part in YorJourney - 90 occurrences
2. Increased knowledge on how to seek mental health / wellbeing support at the University of York - 60 occurrences
3. Increased confidence in academic writing and referencing skills - 51 occurrences
4. Increased understanding in the importance of seeking mental health / wellbeing support when necessary - 38 occurrences
5. Increased confidence that they will feel they belong at university - 37 occurrences
6. Increased confidence in seeking mental health / wellbeing support - 31 occurrences
7. Positive social interactions with other programme students - 24 occurrences
8. Increased confidence that they have the resilience to deal with the various pressures of university - 22 occurrences
9. Increased confidence that the University of York is the right university for them - 21 occurrences
10. Positive social interactions with university students and staff - 19 occurrences

NB - Respondents could mention multiple themes in answer to a survey question, and free text survey responses have also been grouped together so as not to identify individuals.

Table 4: Reflective Analysis of the Mythbusting Strand & feelings about the University of York/Hull York Medical School

Survey questions analysed:

- How do you feel when thinking about the idea of studying at the University of York / Hull York

Medical School? Please list three things below.

- Did your participation in the YorJourney programme influence these feelings at all? If so, could you please explain what it was about the programme that influenced this?
- How did you feel during the myth-busting session/activity?
- What do you think were the benefits of taking part in this session/activity? (Mythbusting)
- Following on from this session/activity, what do you plan to do in your own time to support your learning? (Mythbusting)
- Add any extra thoughts

Expectations & Belonging	Occurrences
Positive change between a student's expectations of university before and after taking part in YorJourney	61
Students feel deserving of their place at university	1
Positive social interactions with university students and staff	7
Positive social interactions with other programme students	7
Increased confidence that they will feel they belong at university	33
Increased confidence that they have the resilience to deal with the various pressures of university	10
Increased confidence that the University of York is the right university for them	18
Academic Skills	
Increased confidence in seeking academic support	7
Increased confidence in academic writing and referencing skills	1
Increased confidence in own skills to produce an academic assignment	0
Increased knowledge on how to seek academic assistance at the University of York	10
Wellbeing	
Increased confidence in seeking mental health / wellbeing support	8
Increased understanding in the importance of seeking mental health / wellbeing support when necessary	4
Increased knowledge on how to seek mental health / wellbeing support at the University of York	12

Table 5: Reflective Analysis of the Academic Skills Strand & Academic Assignment

Survey questions analysed:

- How did you feel during the academic skills session/activity?
- What do you think were the benefits of taking part in this session/activity?
- Following on from this session/activity, what do you plan to do in your own time to support your learning?
- What do you think were the benefits of taking part in the academic assignment?
- Following on from the academic assignment, what do you plan to do in your own time to support your

learning? • Add any extra thoughts		
	Expectations & Belonging	Occurrences
	Positive change between a student's expectations of university before and after taking part in YorJourney	27
	Students feel deserving of their place at university	0
	Positive social interactions with university students and staff	4
	Positive social interactions with other programme students	12
	Increased confidence that they will feel they belong at university	0
	Increased confidence that they have the resilience to deal with the various pressures of university	2
	Increased confidence that the University of York is the right university for them	1
	Academic Skills	
	Increased confidence in seeking academic support	3
	Increased confidence in academic writing and referencing skills	50
	Increased confidence in own skills to produce an academic assignment	9
	Increased knowledge on how to seek academic assistance at the University of York	0
	Wellbeing	
	Increased confidence in seeking mental health / wellbeing support	0
	Increased understanding in the importance of seeking mental health / wellbeing support when necessary	0
	Increased knowledge on how to seek mental health / wellbeing support at the University of York	0

Table 6: Reflective Analysis of the Wellbeing Strand

Survey questions analysed: - How did you feel during the wellbeing session/activity? - What do you think were the benefits of taking part in this session/activity? - Following on from this session/activity, what do you plan to do in your own time to support your learning?		
	Expectations & Belonging	Occurrences
	Positive change between a student's expectations of university before and after taking part in YorJourney	2
	Students feel deserving of their place at university	0
	Positive social interactions with university students and staff	8
	Positive social interactions with other programme students	5

	Increased confidence that they will feel they belong at university	4
	Increased confidence that they have the resilience to deal with the various pressures of university	10
	Increased confidence that the University of York is the right university for them	2
	Academic Skills	
	Increased confidence in seeking academic support	0
	Increased confidence in academic writing and referencing skills	0
	Increased confidence in own skills to produce an academic assignment	0
	Increased knowledge on how to seek academic assistance at the University of York	0
	Wellbeing	
	Increased confidence in seeking mental health / wellbeing support	23
	Increased understanding in the importance of seeking mental health / wellbeing support when necessary	34
	Increased knowledge on how to seek mental health / wellbeing support at the University of York	48

Table 7: Quotes from all strands of YorJourney by theme

Theme	Quotes
Expectations & Belonging	• Before I felt extremely nervous and very out of place as someone from a low income background and first in my family to go but the zoom calls made me feel included and welcomed and really made me realise that there were a lot of people just like me. • I felt very grateful for these sessions and the Yorjourney team as throughout these sessions I learnt to challenge these negative assumptions I had about the university and student life. • These sessions effectively answered all my concerns about university and gave me advice I will make sure I take when starting university so I don't make similar mistakes and will have an effective transition to university. • The session helped me understand the realities of university life in a way that felt honest, which I really appreciated. • I believe I am better prepared for the transition from A level to university study. • Yes, it made me realise that a Russell group university could be an inclusive place that will give me support for not just academic achievements
Academic Skills	• I think it helped me realise the amount of help and many different ways people can go about their research • Gave me confidence in writing and structure ready for my first assignments in university. • I plan on practicing my writing and referencing skills, using websites and referencing tools found online, allowing me to have greater experience in writing and referencing before university. • I plan to continue to practice referencing skills in my own time to help improve confidence, reduce anxiety and enhance understanding

Wellbeing	• I felt relieved learning about the help available on campus and that I can speak out when I'm struggling and will get effective support for my mental health so I don't have to struggle in silence like I have done in the past. • The students also shared their positive experiences with the support system, which was reassuring. • Made me reflect on ways I look after myself • I now know what actions to take to get support, especially when seeking a adhd/autism diagnosis so I'm really grateful for the responses to my queries • I feel like I will be supported at university
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Discussion

Improvements in belonging, preparedness & confidence seeking support

As in previous years' internal evaluation reports, participant feedback has shown that students find the YorJourney programme to be of benefit to them beyond simply accessing their alternative offer. This impact is seen in:

- the [responses to the validated evaluation questions](#), some of which were statistically significant
 - Confidence and Mental Health scores showed a statistically significant increase at the 0.1% level
 - Wellbeing scores showed a statistically significant increase
 - The difference between students' cognitive strategy scores were statistically significant
- participants' individual reflections on the programme as a whole
 - Positive change between a student's expectations of university before and after taking part in YorJourney - 90 occurrences
 - Increased knowledge on how to seek mental health / wellbeing support at the University of York - 60 occurrences
 - Increased confidence in academic writing and referencing skills - 51 occurrences

Though we cannot state that participants now have a full accurate understanding of university life, by analysing their pre and post survey responses, we can infer their change in knowledge and attitudes towards certain elements. The findings from these surveys mean that we can be more confident of the positive impact of YorJourney on supporting the participants' transition to Higher Education.

Differences in impact between attending different live sessions within the same strand

The survey results show that there were some differences in mean responses depending on session attendance. The general findings were as follows:

- Generally, those who attended the 'Wellbeing - Support at York' session scored more highly across more outcomes in the post survey than those who attended the 'Wellbeing - Selfcare' session
- Generally, those who attended the Mythbusting - Fact or Freshers' Fiction' session scored more highly across more outcomes in the post survey than those who attended the 'Mythbusting - Fact or Faculty Fiction' session
- Generally, those who attended the 'Academic Skills - Referencing & Writing' session scored more highly across more outcomes in the post survey than those who attend the 'Academic Skills - Academic Seminar' session

Several reasons may explain the difference in scores, including that the 'Wellbeing - Support at York' focused more on the specific formal support structures in place at the university, which aligns more closely to the

statements used to assess the outcomes, or that the 'Wellbeing - Selfcare' session focused more on independent strategies for managing wellbeing. With regards to the latter, it is possible that participants scored lower after this session in recognition that independent strategies require a degree of personal effort that is different or greater than accessing support which is provided by others.

As has already been mentioned, the Wellbeing, Mythbusting & Academic Skills sessions listed above may also have more effectively aligned with this particular cohorts' pre-existing concerns around transitioning to university.

Differences in impact between completing the Academic Assignment versus not completing it

- Generally, those who completed the Academic Assignment scored more highly across more statements in the post survey than those who did not complete the Academic Assignment

There are several reasons that may explain this difference, including that these students have practised using their academic skills on university level assignment, or that students may feel more confident in their ability to produce academic work at a university level following their experience of actually successfully completing and receiving constructive feedback on their assignment.

Differences in impact between completing the Next Steps to University MOOC versus not completing it

- Generally, those who completed the 'Next Steps to University' MOOC scored more highly across 2 of the outcomes than those who did not

That students are able to digest the content of the MOOC at their own pace, and to refer back to this information at any point, may explain this difference.

Limitations and future evaluation plans

Whilst we did find improvements in responses between the pre and post survey data collection points, there are limits to this impact evaluation. Firstly, only the students participating in YorJourney were surveyed, so we cannot say that YorJourney is the cause of these increases, but we have shown there is a correlation between participating in YorJourney and increases in preparedness, confidence in seeking support and sense of belonging. Additionally, the sample sizes are generally small, particularly in relation to some specific demographic data. We could consider combining subsequent cohorts in the future, where appropriate, and consent has been given, to increase the sample size and understand any differences between demographic groups. We will also consider updating the TASO validated questions ([Appendix B: Evaluation Framework](#)) for future YorJourney cohorts to reflect the most recent updated wording recommended by TASO. This may impact comparisons between the 2024/25 impact evaluation and subsequent evaluations in relation to these questions specifically.

Additionally, this year we are unable to publish the findings from the long-post survey due to the limited number of responses from participants who consented to participate in the research. For 2026, we hope to increase the number of responses from enrolled participants to gain further insight into the impact of YorJourney on their transition to the University of York. To achieve this, we propose to increase the number of survey reminders to enrolled participants, and to increase the number (not value) of vouchers available in the prize draw for survey completion in line with our approved research ethics.

Recommendations

- Continue to strengthen the YorJourney programme to further enhance the efficacy and impact

- Monitor differences between session attendance and evaluation outcomes, with a view to understanding if these differences are cohort specific, or whether there is a pattern between cohorts which should be addressed
- Aim to increase the number of long-post survey responses - this will vary year on year, dependent on enrollment numbers
 - To achieve this, we propose to increase the number of survey reminders to enrolled participants, and to increase the number (not value) of vouchers available in the prize draw for survey completion in line with our approved research ethics.

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Appendix A: YorJourney Theory of Change

Problem:

Students with socioeconomic disadvantages who have accepted an alternative offer at the University of York can face barriers in their education journey that can prevent them from accessing and/or smoothly transitioning into Higher Education. Such barriers include misconceptions around university life, a lack of awareness of the support available at university, as well as low self-efficacy around personal academic abilities.

Target Population:

- Students who have accepted an alternative offer to study any course at the University of York as their firm or insurance choice
- Students who have accepted an alternative offer to study Medicine at the Hull York Medical School with or without a Gateway year as their firm choice
- Students who have accepted a place on the reserve list to study Medicine at the Hull York Medical School (HYMS)

Inputs / Activities:

YorJourney is a three week programme to support University of York or HYMS alternative offer holders to transition into university. Students must participate in at least two of the following strands, while those on the reserve list must complete only one of the following strands. In addition, all students must complete the reflective activities and the MOOC to unlock their alternative offer.

- Strand 1: Mythbusting
- Strand 2: Academic Skills
- Strand 3: Wellbeing
- Strand 4: Academic Assignment
- Reflective activities after each strand and after the overall programme
- Next Steps MOOC
- Optional social events

Short-term Outcomes

Student outcomes:

- The gap between student expectations of university and the reality is narrowed
- Increased confidence in seeking academic and mental health support
- Strand 1: Mythbusting → students feeling deserving of their place at university
- Strand 2: Academic Skills → increased academic writing and referencing skills
- Strand 3: Wellbeing → increased understanding of the importance of wellbeing and seeking support when necessary
- Strand 4: Academic Assignment → improved skills in producing an entire academic assignment

Wider university stakeholder outcomes:

- The University of York Admissions team is assured that these students are committed to accessing their alternative offers

Intermediate Outcomes

Student outcomes:

- Students experience greater positive social interactions with university students and staff

- Increased ability to independently seek the assistance (ie. academic, pastoral, overall health) that they may require
- Students feel empowered to find their place of belonging in HE
- Increased resilience to various pressures that may be present in a university environment

Wider university stakeholder outcomes:

- Increased credibility of YorJourney as a programme that increases the rate of alternative acceptance offers and the skills needed for university study

Overall Aim:

- Students are eligible for and accept their alternative offers, while also feeling supported with their final transition to the university of York / Hull York Medical School

Assumptions:

- Students are available to attend
- Staff members outside of the team are happy to give their time to support
- YorJourney staff knows what a student wants support with as part of their transition to university
- Students have the required resources to attend
- Students see the benefits to completing YorJourney outside of accessing their alternative offer
- Students know what it is that they need to do to access their alternative offer
- Students want to access their alternative offers

Barriers:

- Students don't always have access to the resources required
- Not all students are available to attend YorJourney during the summer months
- YorJourney takes place only after students have completed a previous post-16 University of York WP programme. One effect of this, is that student can often forget or are unaware of needing to complete YorJourney, and so do not sign up for participation
- Students may not want to access their alternative offers

Appendix B: Evaluation Framework

[illegible]

	I can clearly explain my ideas, even when writing about complicated things.*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I can confidently explain my ideas in small group discussions.*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The following statements relate to how you might feel about the importance of wellbeing and support. 1							
<i>Understanding of the importance of wellbeing and seeking support when necessary</i>	Please consider each statement and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Prefer not to say
	Taking care of my wellbeing is a priority	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	If I am not feeling well, I will prioritise seeking the support that I need to get better	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I generally avoid seeking external support when trying to improve my wellbeing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	I actively encourage my friends to seek support if they are struggling with their wellbeing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

1. Custom questions developed with ImpactEd

2. [Access and Success Questionnaire \(ASQ\), TASO](#), Scale 4b & 5

*please note the wording of the questions from scale 5 have since been slightly updated by TASO

Appendix C: Participant Demographics / Student Groups

Student Group	Definition
Black Access (BA)	Post-16 programme for Year 12 students from a Black background. Participants may also meet criteria including but not limited to: care experienced, young carer, first generation, Free School Meals, eligible for discretionary payments, disabled or has a long term health condition, military or service family
Next Step York (NSY)	Post-16 programme for Year 12 students from underrepresented groups in Higher Education. Participants may meet criteria including but not limited to: care experienced, young carer, first generation, Free School Meals, eligible for discretionary payments, disabled or has a long term health condition, military or service family, BAME
Pathways to Medicine (PtM)	Post-16 programme for Aspiring Medics in Year 12 from underrepresented groups in Higher Education, and Medicine.
York Experience Summer School (YESS)	Residential programme for Year 12 students from underrepresented groups in Higher Education. This is no longer offered as a programme.
Care Experienced	Students who have care experience ; this refers to anyone who has been, or is currently, in care. This care may have been provided in many different settings, including living with foster carers; living in a residential children's home; being looked after at home under a supervision order; living with friends or relatives in kinship care.
Young Carer	Students with unpaid caring responsibilities for a family member
First Generation	Students who are the first generation in their family to go to university
Free School Meals (FSM)	Students entitled to, or in receipt, of free school meals
Eligible for Discretionary payments	Students entitled to, or in receipt, of discretionary payments at sixth form / college (16-19 Bursary)
Disabled or has a long-term health condition	Students who report a disability, this includes students with long-term health conditions, specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD, autistic spectrum conditions and mental health conditions
BAME	Students from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) background
IMD 1 or 2	Measure of relative deprivation. IMD 1 and 2 represent the most deprived areas. <i>Please note, IMD 2019 was used for this YorJourney cohort.</i>