

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

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*Reflections on Phase One  
Dr Sarah Tazzyman, CFE Research*

# *Background to NCOP*

- Eliminating gaps in access and success to improve equality of opportunity in HE for under-represented groups is a key strategic priority for the OfS
- NCOP supporting achievement of this aim by:
  - Targeting young people in areas with low absolute levels of HE participation and where participation is lower than expected given GCSE attainment
  - Funding a sustained, progressive and intensive programme of support over 4 years

## *Evaluation aims and objectives*

- ***Formative evaluation*** examining the effectiveness of the processes involved in collaborative approaches to outreach and contributing to a fuller understanding of what works, in what context and why.
- ***Impact evaluation*** assessing changes in the rate of progression to HE at the programme level using experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies.

# *Our mixed-method approach*

## **Formative evaluation**

- Annual online survey of consortia staff and stakeholders
- Annual field visits to a cross section of consortia
- Review of local evaluation evidence

## **Impact evaluation**

- Longitudinal participant survey linked to national tracking & admin data
- Three Randomised Control Trials

## **Capacity Building**

- Webinars and support materials
- Support to develop local evaluation plans in line with national framework
- Case management to support engagement in impact evaluation

# *How NCOP is supporting effective outreach and impacting on progression to HE*

## *The value of collaboration*

- **Operating models** reflect size and scale of consortia and local context
- Fostered the development of **new partnerships** and strengthened **existing relationships**
- **Extended reach** of individual consortium members and addressed '**cold spots**'
- Facilitated **access to knowledge and expertise** for individual consortium members
- Development of **varied offer** that can be **tailored to the needs** of schools/FECs and individual pupils
- Creation of **fresh ideas & innovative approaches** to engaging pupils and other key 'influencers'

# *Added value of NCOP – Geography and locality*

- In depth understanding of geography and locality is enabling a bespoke and tailored outreach offer for target learners, teachers, and parents
- Collaborative nature of NCOP creates opportunities for learners to visit different regions and experience a range of social and cultural events

*“Geography is the main thing. You can’t underestimate the location of East Anglia and Norfolk being so far east, mostly surrounded by water, north and east. So, that limits the experiences and aspirations of kids in this area. Transport routes aren’t very good, so even coming to the major city in Norfolk is alien to lots of kids in Kingsley and Great Yarmouth, Stretford, you know. They might come here on a shopping trip, but that’s it.*

*“I think part of the programme, really strongly, is about experiences to other parts of the country to see how easy it is to get there but also these cultural trips but then it’s about awareness of opportunities within the broader county itself”*

## *London NCOP - unique geography*

- London's size, presence of target wards on the periphery of the capital and high number of HE providers creates distinctiveness in how schools/FECs have engaged in NCOP
- Distance and travel time creates barriers to target schools on outskirts of city
- Reduced funding formula has negatively impacted on schools being able to engage in NCOP
- Threats of terrorism have resulted in schools imposing outright bans on travel to events



# Overcoming geographical barriers

- 1:1 work with senior management in target schools
- Increasing sense of place and belonging
  - Liverpool residential
- Cultural capital weekend
- Online 'Adventure HE' course
- Collaborative conferences

*"This was an awesome weekend. Thank you so much. I loved the space descent virtual reality experience at the Science Museum and the theatre. It was also amazing to sleep in student university accommodation. I think I can see myself at uni now." – Year 10 student,*

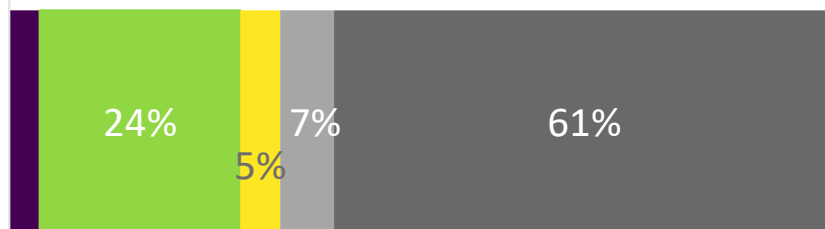
# *Added value of NCOP – Geography and locality*

- Locality/region has been reflected in some local evaluation plans
- Can be challenging to align national indicators with local region
- Findings from local evaluations will provide insights about the importance of context and what outreach works and for whom

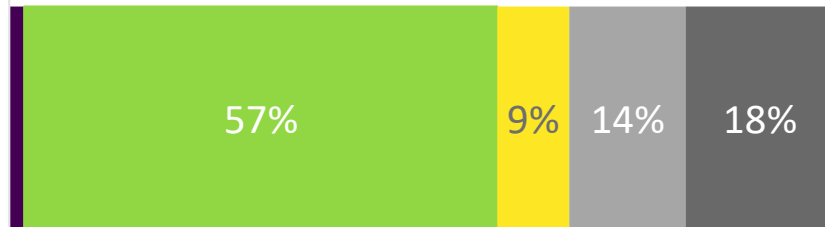
*“We based our theory of change that we created on all of the information that we gathered at the beginning, all the focus groups that we did, to identify the key barriers within our region. I think those have stayed consistent, but we perhaps hadn’t realised the depth that those barriers went to, especially in terms of confidence and the students taking opportunities. I think we maybe underestimated the depth that some of those barriers go to. So, we have, kind of, evolved. So, we developed a whole programme plan”*

## *Perceived impact on parents & teachers*

Parents' knowledge and awareness of the options for students in HE Y1 (325)



Parents' knowledge and awareness of the options for students in HE Y2 (505)



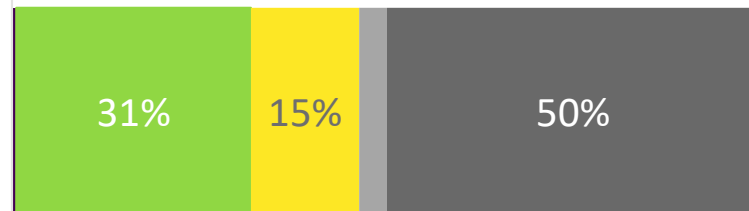
■ No positive impact at all   ■ Some impact   ■ A great deal of impact   ■ I don't know   ■ It's too early to say

## *Benefits for Schools/FECs*

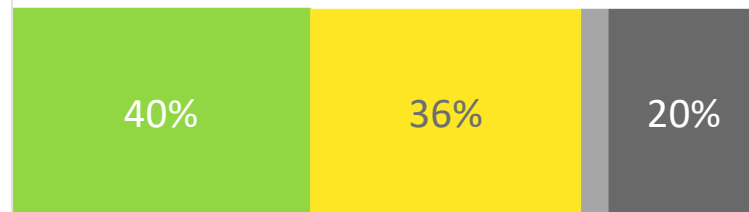
- **Access to outreach:** delivering outreach in some schools/FECs for the first time
- **Staff resources:** dedicated staff located within the schools/FECs to co-ordinate outreach
- **Staff development:** upskilling teachers to support target learners and sustain activities beyond the life of the programme.
- **Support for pupils:** activities and interventions to raise aspirations and increase rates of progression to HE

## *Perceived impact on learners*

Likelihood that able pupils will consider HE who would have otherwise considered other options  
Y1 (325)



Likelihood that able pupils will consider HE who would have otherwise considered other options  
Y2 (504)



■ No positive impact at all ■ Some impact ■ A great deal of impact ■ I don't know ■ It's too early to say

## *Evaluating impact*

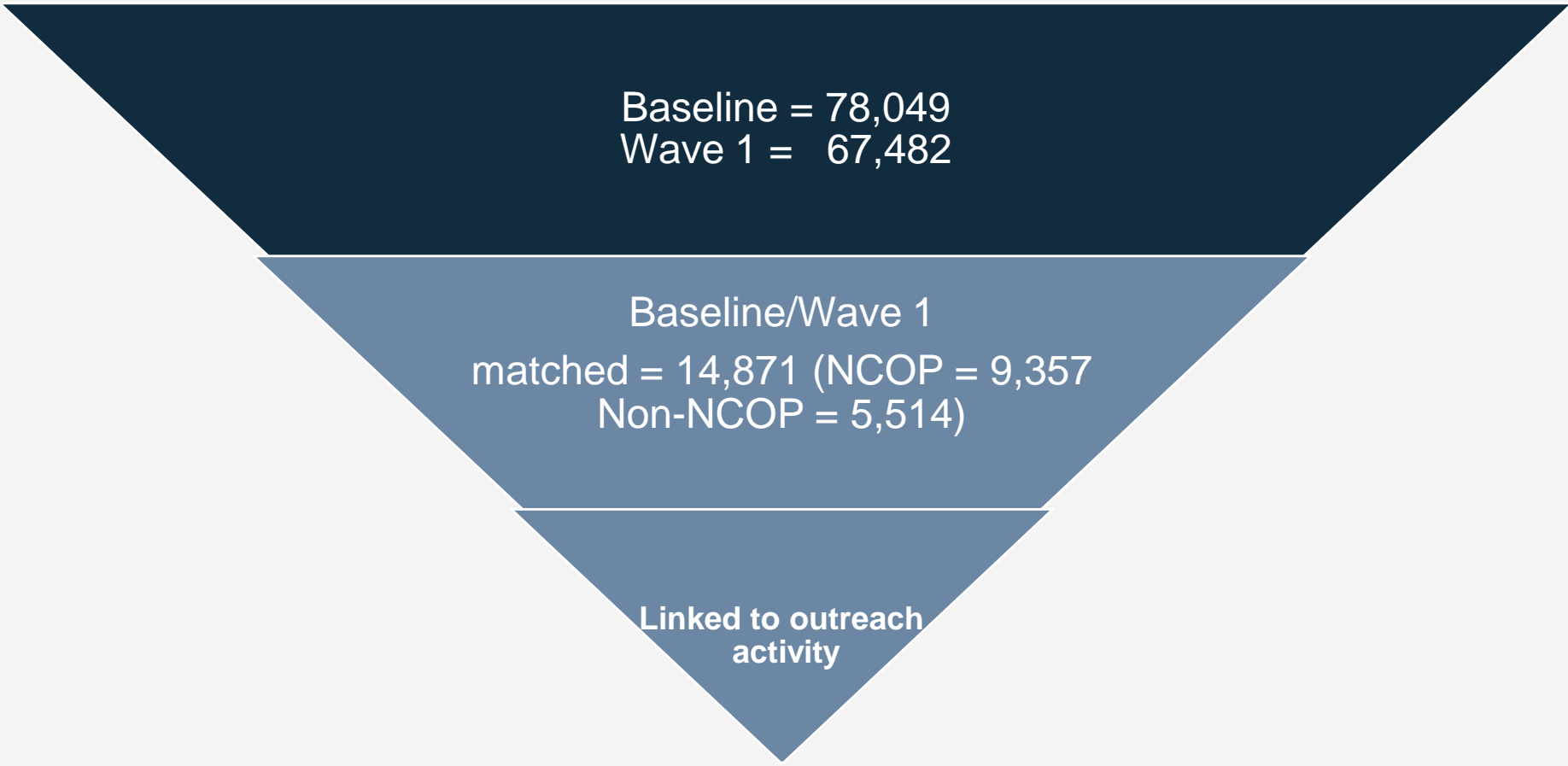
**Participant survey** measuring extent to which NCOP impacts:

- Learners' attitudes towards HE
- Knowledge about HE
- Intentions to progress to HE

**Randomised Controlled Trials** measuring impact of specific interventions:

- E-mentoring
- Text-based nudging
- Summer Schools

# *Participant learner survey - Sample*



Baseline = 78,049  
Wave 1 = 67,482

Baseline/Wave 1  
matched = 14,871 (NCOP = 9,357  
Non-NCOP = 5,514)

Linked to outreach  
activity

## *Analysis of participant learner survey*

- Currently underway for end of phase one reporting
- Top-line analysis of matched learner survey data to determine patterns in the data
- Consider demographic characteristics (e.g. BAME, white males, disability) and change between baseline and wave 1
- Analysis of matched data set together with outreach activity



## *RCTs - lessons learned*

- Ensure strategic buy-on from all parties involved in the trial
- Ensure the appropriate skills and capacity are available to design and implement the trial
- Set realistic timelines and test feasibility
- Ensure clear communication between strategic and operational teams and schools/FECs involved
- Anticipate and address ethical concerns and tensions that may arise as a result of pressure to achieve operational targets

Lessons summarised in our recent blog:

<http://cfe.org.uk/2018/11/28/implementing-randomised-controlled-trials-to-evaluate-the-impact-of-outreach-activity-lessons-learned/>

# *Strength and credibility of emerging local evidence*

## *There is scope to strengthen the evidence base for NCOP in phase two*

- All 29 consortia submitted an evaluation plan which was reviewed by CFE
- Strong grasp of process evaluation, some concerns about methods to demonstrate impact
- Limited evidence that consortia are developing and implementing experimental methods – many proposing pre-post studies.
- Limited evidence of impact to date – outputs more focused on monitoring, operational issues and small-scale pre-post designs.

# *Strengthening local evaluation approaches*

Consortia could seek to strengthen their approach to evaluation by:

- mobilising more expertise to ensure a match between evaluation methods and specific interventions
- ensuring adequate resource and capacity is allocated to evaluation – skill levels, staff turnover and levels of investment (average of 2.12% funding) in evaluation present key risks to ensuring robust local evaluation

## *Reflections ahead of phase two*

Is it appropriate to include learners' voices on the governance board?

How can learners' voices be successfully integrated?

What factors ensure a strategic focus is maintained on the governance board?

What plans do consortia have to review their governance structures?

## *Reflections ahead of phase two*

Extent to which evaluation evidence is being used to inform the development of phase two strategic plans?

What plans to consortia have to review their evaluation strategy and evaluation methods?

What processes are in place to ensure evaluation plans are fully embedded and mobilised?

Resource review – do consortia have right expertise levels/capacity in place to demonstrate impact of NCOP at the local level?

*Thank you!*

*For more information contact*

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