

# Blackpool and The Fylde College Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25



## 1. Introduction

Blackpool and The Fylde College’s (B&FC) commitment to quality, inclusion and social mobility and to supporting economic growth and individual success is central to its ethos and mission. One of the largest and most successful colleges in the country (in the top 3% of all FE colleges nationally for the last five consecutive years<sup>1</sup>), B&FC has been serving the people and businesses of the region for over 125 years. B&FC is also one of the largest providers of college-based higher education nationally, with significant success in addressing the impacts of deprivation and poor attainment in secondary schools. We welcome the more defined sector-wide focus on reducing gaps in access, continuation, attainment and progression between student groups. To provide context, B&FC students are predominantly drawn from the local area, are mature (average age of 29) and enter higher education with a range of entry qualifications and experience:

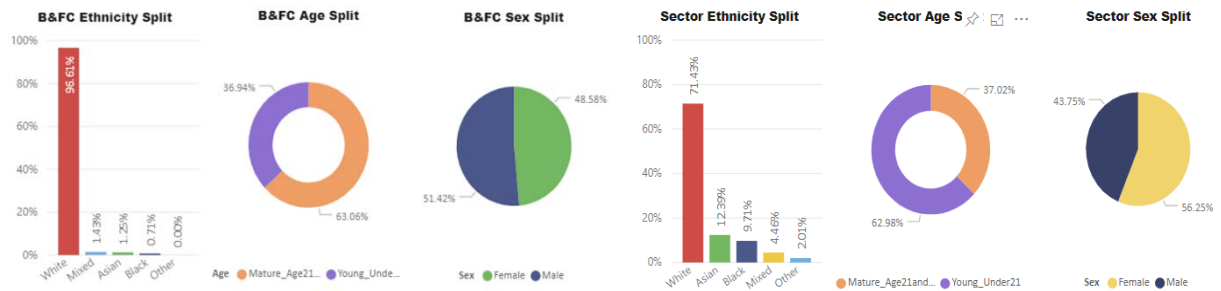


Figure 1: 2017-18 profile of all HE students at Blackpool and The Fylde College (B&FC) compared with across the HE sector

### 1.1. Office for Students’ (OfS) definitions

The OfS has provided data resources to help higher education providers identify variances between the access and performance of different student groups. The data illustrates performance for each stage of the student lifecycle for the provider (B&FC) and for all English HE providers.

Indicator	Definition	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Access	The makeup of students entering higher education	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Continuation FT	Students who continue their higher education journey one year after commencing a HE programme	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Continuation PT	Students who continue their higher education journey two years after commencing a HE programme	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Attainment	The proportion of Level 6 graduates achieving first (1 <sup>st</sup> ) or upper second (2:1) class degrees	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Progression	The activity of students 6 months after leaving HE, in terms of their progression to highly skilled employment or higher-level study	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17

Table 1: Office for Students measures of performance (Indicators) and the years to which the data relate

<sup>1</sup> ESFA National Achievement Rate Tables

## 2. Assessment of performance

Unless otherwise stated our assessment of performance draws on OfS data (including the data dashboard<sup>2</sup>) with reference to B&FC's own data.

### 2.1 Disadvantaged Areas and Higher Education Participation

Our continuing ambitions and success must be contextualised to the educational, social and economic backdrop of Blackpool and Lancashire. Blackpool is one of twelve national Opportunity Areas identified by government, with education central to breaking down barriers to social mobility within the town. Opportunity areas have the greatest need and the lowest rates of social mobility in England. Blackpool is ranked 316<sup>th</sup> out of 324 districts in the Social Mobility Index<sup>3</sup> which compares the chances that children from different areas will do well at school and get good jobs. Blackpool is the most deprived local authority in England (based on rank and score), with an estimated 7,700 children living in low-income families. Blackpool has a greater proportion of children in need than all bar one local authority. Young people in the town are more likely than their peers elsewhere to suffer from poor health and issues such as teenage pregnancy and alcohol or substance abuse. This impacts on education at all stages. In 2016, GCSE results in Blackpool's schools were among the lowest in England<sup>4</sup>.

Blackpool has the highest proportion of its neighbourhoods in the most deprived one per cent nationally and has one of the highest levels of income deprivation and employment deprivation. To a lesser extent, many of Lancashire's urban centres, including nearby Preston, face similar issues. The importance of opportunities to progress to higher education as a driver of economic and social outcomes in the region cannot be underestimated.

#### 2.1.1. Access

B&FC continues to have a strong commitment to widening access and social mobility and access to local higher education is a key driver for economic growth. B&FC is well placed to offer the local community the opportunity to access high quality higher education. A review of OfS data concerned with access to HE at B&FC indicates the following are noteworthy:

##### 2.1.1.1 Students from Deprived Areas (IMD Quintiles)

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is the most widely used government measure of relative deprivation used to rank areas across England. It ranks areas in England from most to least deprived and groups them into quintiles (Q) with 1 representing the highest deprivation and 5 the lowest.

At B&FC the greatest percentage of full time HE students come from IMD Q1 and the smallest from IMD Q5. According to the latest IMD<sup>5</sup>, neighbourhoods in Blackpool account for eight of the ten most deprived neighbourhoods nationally and Blackpool has the highest proportion of its neighbourhoods in the most deprived quintile. It is unsurprising then that B&FC would have a different profile to that of the overall HE sector which sees a flatter distribution across the IMD quintiles as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

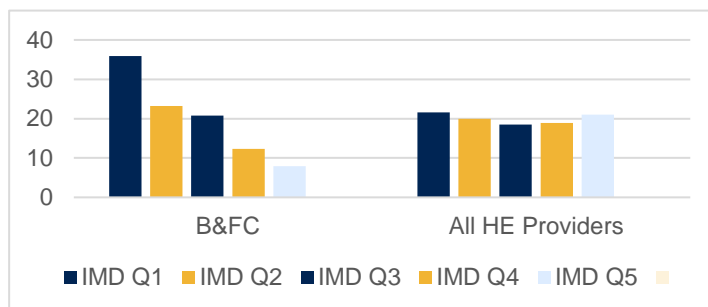


Figure 2: Distribution (%) of students by IMD quintile at B&FC compared with all English HEIs

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>

<sup>3</sup> The Social Mobility Index: Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission January 2016

<sup>4</sup> Blackpool Opportunity Area Delivery Plan 2017-2020 ISBN 978-1-78105-808-4

<sup>5</sup> The English Indices of Deprivation 2019 (IoD2019) Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government Statistical Release 26 September 2019

The percentage of full time B&FC undergraduates from IMD Q1 was significantly higher than from IMD Q5 and the gap between the two groups in year 5 remains high at -27.9 pp. This shows that the proportion of full time B&FC students from the most disadvantaged areas is consistently greater than the proportion from the least disadvantaged areas. Therefore, no action is required.

Conversely, the percentage of part time undergraduates from IMD Q1 was lower than the percentage from IMD Q5. The gap between the two groups in year 5 was 8.0 pp having decreased 0.4 pp since year 1 but increased 2.4 pp since year 4. Again, neither change was statistically significant. This shows a low level of variability in the proportions of students over the period. Given the high concentration of deprived postcodes in the local area, eliminating this gap will be an area of focus and is included in the targets of this plan (PTA\_3).

The percentage of full time IMD Q1 18-year olds at B&FC was significantly different to the proportion in the UK population for years 1 and 2. In these years, the gaps between the two were -14.5 pp and -18.8 pp respectively with a higher percentage of IMD Q1 students at B&FC compared with the UK population. However, this gap reduced over the subsequent years and, by year 5, it was 2.3 pp showing a lower percentage of 18-year old IMD Q1 students at B&FC compared with the UK population. POLAR4 data identifies a similar trend in participation of students from POLAR4 Q1 (see Section 2.1.1.2) and a target (PTA\_1) has been set to reduce this gap by 2024-25 which we expect will have a positive impact on the IMD gap also (see Figure 4).

The gap between the percentage of full time B&FC 18-year old students from IMD Q5 was also significantly different to that of the UK population for years 1 to 4. This gap has changed significantly over time though and was 2.9 pp in year 5. This shows that, whilst B&FC has a smaller percentage of full time 18-year old students from IMD Q5 than in the UK population, the percentage is increasing and becoming much closer to that of the UK population. Whilst we do not feel a specific target is required to address this, our activity to increase access for students from disadvantaged areas are likely to affect this group as well. We will therefore monitor this area.

For part time B&FC students, many of whom are likely to be in employment, typically the greatest proportion come from IMD Q4, although in 2017-18 the greatest proportion were from IMD Q5. The smallest proportion come from IMD Q1 from years 1 to 4 and from IMD Q2 in year 5. The percentage of part time undergraduates at B&FC from IMD Q1 is lower than the percentage from IMD Q5 across all 5 years. The gap in access between these two student groups ranges from 2.3 pp to 8.3 pp but the overall change in gap from years 1 to 5 is a reduction of only 0.4 pp demonstrating minimal variability. In year 5 the gap was 8.0 pp and we have set a target (PTA\_3) to eliminate this gap by 2025.

The gap between the percentage of part time B&FC students from IMD Q1 and IMD Q1 individuals in the UK population was significant for all 5 years, ranging from 11.6 pp to 18.4 pp and remaining at 12.4 pp in year 5. At B&FC, part time provision is relatively small (~10% of our HE provision excluding non-prescribed and HN provision). Much of B&FC's full time HE provision includes teaching scheduled in flexible blocks to support students to study full time qualification whilst being employed or accommodating other commitments, such as childcare. This explains the differing profile of our part time students and part time provision may further diminish in the future as employers move towards increasing their higher and degree apprenticeships.

#### 2.1.1.2 Students from Areas of Low Participation (POLAR Quintiles)

The participation of local areas (POLAR) classification refers to the proportion of the young population that participates in higher education by area, ranging from the most (Quintile 5) to the least (Quintile 1). The most recent version of the classification is POLAR4, which is based on the combined participation rates of those who entered higher education between 2009-10 and 2013-14 (if they entered aged 18), or between 2010-11 and 2014-15 (if they entered aged 19).

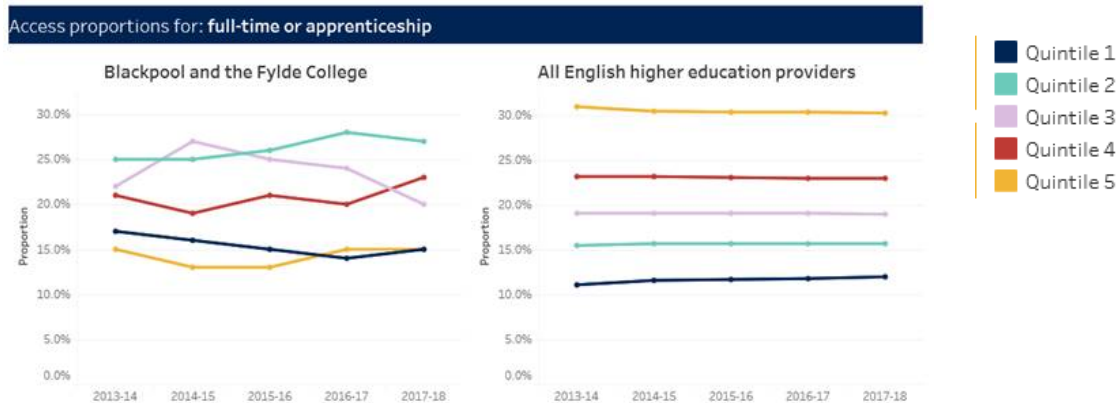


Figure 3: Distribution of FT students at B&FC from POLAR4 quintiles 1 to 5 compared with the distribution across all English HEIs

Until year 5 (2017-18), the relative proportions of full time B&FC students across the POLAR4 quintiles (Q) has tended to be inverse to those typically seen in the overall full time HE sector, with the exception of Q1. By year 5, the most significant remaining differences were for Q2 and Q5. Since the shift to POLAR4 classification, at B&FC, the greatest proportion of young full time students and apprentices come from Q2 and the smallest from Q5 and Q1.

The percentage of full time undergraduate students from Q1 has been similar to that from Q5 with Q1 students tending to account for a slightly greater percentage until year 4. By year 5, the gap between the two groups had shifted from a negative gap to 0.9 pp indicating a shift to Q5 students outnumbering Q1 students. More detailed analysis reveals that, for full time students completing a first degree<sup>6</sup>, the percentage from Q1 increased between years 1 and 5 whilst the percentage from Q5 decreased. This increase, whilst not statistically significant, illustrates a positive move towards stronger recruitment to full time first degrees from Q1.

However, the percentage of 18-year old full time B&FC students from Q1 was significantly different to the UK 18-year old population in year 5, the gap between the two being 5.6 pp. This gap has changed over the 5 year period, rising from -0.4 pp in year 1 to 5.6 pp in year 5 and increasing by 3.5 pp from year 4 to year 5. This demonstrates that the proportion of full time B&FC students from Q1 is becoming smaller than the proportion in the UK population. To counter this we have set an ambitious target (PTA\_1) to eliminate this gap by 2025. For 18-year olds, the gap between the percentage of Q5 individuals studying full time at B&FC compared with those from Q5 in the UK population was also statistically significant for four of the five years, including year 5 when it was 6.7 pp (down 4.1 pp since year 1). Although B&FC has fewer students from IMD Q5, this is not a target group for B&FC since it represents those students from less disadvantaged areas (Q5).

At B&FC the percentage of part time students accessing undergraduate HE provision from Q1 is significantly lower than from Q5. The access gap between Q1 and Q5 ranges from 12.8 pp in year 4 to 38.8 pp in year 5, when B&FC saw no part time HE students from Q1. The gap change between year 4 to year 5 was statistically significant at 26.0 pp. The gap between the percentage of B&FC 18-year old part time students from Q1 compared with Q1 individuals in the UK population was also statistically significant for all five years (14.9 pp in year 5). Our total numbers of part time 18 year old students is small (10 in 2017-18) and our overall part time cohort has seen minimal variance over the five years. Therefore, we do not envisage this gap being eliminated over the lifetime of this plan. However, we have set a target (PTA\_2) of reducing the gap to 6.0 pp by 2024-25 and will aim to eliminate it completely by 2027.

As outlined above, part time provision at B&FC is relatively small (~10% of our HE provision) and generally attracts students already in employment. Much of B&FC's full time HE provision (including higher and degree apprenticeships which are an area of growth at B&FC) has increasingly flexible modes of delivery to accommodate a range of lifestyles, commitments and employment contexts. We believe that this may lead to a reduction in part time student numbers over time. Between 2020 and 2025, we will continue to enrich our work with employers in the

<sup>6</sup> This comprises an Honours degree at B&FC

locality, many of whom are based in or near areas of deprivation and low participation. These activities will encourage wider access from under-represented groups to both part time and full time provision (including apprenticeships). B&FC will closely monitor and evaluate the access of our part time students to ensure gaps do not widen further.

## 2.1.2. Outcomes/Success

### 2.1.2.1 Continuation - Students from Deprived Areas (IMD Quintiles)

In year 5, the percentage of full time B&FC undergraduates from IMD Q1 who remained in HE after a year (i.e., who continued) was slightly higher than those from Q5, the gap between the two groups being -3.7 pp. Over the five years of data, the gap changed from 7.0 pp to -3.7 pp, a change which, whilst not significant, does illustrate that students from IMD Q1 are now achieving higher continuation rates than those from IMD Q5. This suggests that interventions made at B&FC to help retain students from disadvantaged areas have already reaped some success. Conversely, the gap in continuation between part time undergraduates who continued from IMD Q1 and those from IMD Q5 has increased since year 1. It was statistically significant in year 4 and remained high at 18.2 pp in year 5. It is likely that the difference between the two appears significant as a result of rounding of small numbers (students with the potential to continue numbered only 30-35 in year 5). Therefore, we do not plan to set a target for this area. However, in 2017-18, the group of IMD Q1 students who were eligible to continue numbered only 25 and males form at least two thirds of our part time cohort, we would expect to see a positive impact as a result of our target to improve continuation for males from IMD Q1 & Q2 (PTS\_1).

### 2.1.2.2 Continuation - Students from Areas of Low Participation (POLAR4 quintiles)

The percentage of full time B&FC undergraduates who continued from POLAR4 Q1 is slightly higher than the percentage who continued from Q5. The gap in continuation between students from Q1 and Q5 shifts over the five years but follows no consistent trend. In year 5, continuation of students from Q1 was 0.7 pp better than for those from Q5. This clearly illustrates the positive impact of interventions made by B&FC to support retention of students from low participation regions. Volumes of part time B&FC undergraduates from Q1 have been too small to perform any meaningful analysis.

### 2.1.2.3 Attainment - Students from Deprived Areas (IMD Quintiles)

The percentage of full time B&FC students from IMD Q1 who 'attained' is significantly lower in some years than those who 'attained' from IMD Q5. The gap between the two groups fluctuates inconsistently, reaching a maximum of 29.4 pp in year 5 after a statistically significant change since year 4. In years 1, 2, 3 and 5, attainment is stronger for students from Q5. A target (PTS\_3) to eliminate this gap by 2025 has been set.

### 2.1.2.4 Attainment - Students from Areas of Low Participation (POLAR4 quintiles)

Attainment of full time B&FC undergraduates from POLAR4 Q1 fluctuated significantly over the five years, peaking at 81.8% in year 3. The gap in attainment between this group and those from Q5 shifted from -21.8 pp in year 3 (when Q1 students attained far better) to 20.3 pp in year 5 (when Q5 students attained better). This gap change was 22.1 pp from year 1 to 5 and 39.1 pp from year 4 to 5. Whilst not statistically significant, the size of the gap itself suggests it is worthy of attention. However, due to the volatile nature of the gap change (it shifted from 3.7 in year 2 to -21.8 pp in year 3 and -18.7 pp in year 4), it is not possible to see any clear trend or trajectory which makes it difficult to infer anything meaningful from the data. Rather than set an unclear target, we will monitor the comparative performance of these two student groups with a view to further analysis which will inform the planned setting of appropriate targets in the second year of this plan (2021-22).

Much of the Blackpool coastal region is categorised in POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2 (see Figure 4). In addition, Blackpool has the highest proportion of its neighbourhoods in the most deprived one per cent nationally. As a result of the disadvantaged nature of most of the region's postcodes, many of these same areas also fall within IMD quintiles 1 and 2.

Therefore, we anticipate that eliminating the attainment gap between students from IMD Q1 and Q5 will also have a positive impact upon the gap in relation to POLAR4 quintiles. In the unlikely event that this proves not to be the case, we will identify any continuing gap through our Learning, Teaching & Equality Committee (LTEC) which routinely monitors a range of performance measures for disadvantaged groups across HE, FE and apprenticeships. This group will identify any action required to remove the gap by 2025.

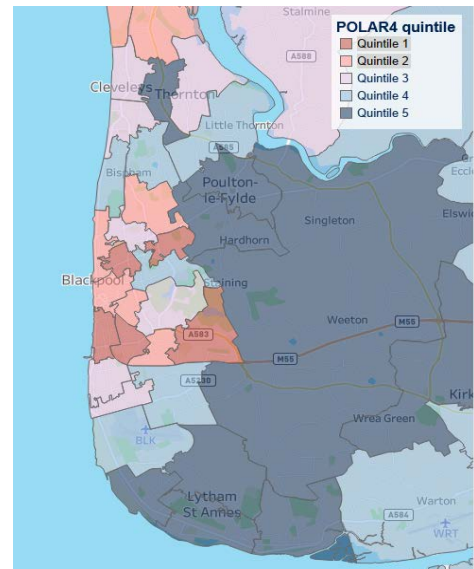


Figure 4: Map showing POLAR4 distribution of Blackpool and surrounding areas

#### 2.1.2.5 Progression - Students from Deprived Areas (IMD Quintiles)

The percentage of full time B&FC undergraduates from IMD Q1 who progressed into highly skilled employment or higher-level study was significantly higher than for students from IMD Q5 in three of the five years. The gap between the two groups in year 1 was significant (-17.6 pp) with IMD Q1 students progressing significantly better than their peers from IMD Q5. Whilst progression of IMD Q1 students is even greater in year 5 (68.6% compared with 66.8% in year 1), it was inconsistent in the intermediate years. In addition, IMD Q5 students are tending to progress much better than they did in year 1 so the gap is less prominent in the other years. Nevertheless, IMD Q1 students at B&FC do continue to progress better than IMD Q5 students. Since the more disadvantaged group is still outperforming the less disadvantaged group, there is no action other than to continue to monitor this measure.

Since there was no progression data for part time students from IMD Q1, we have analysed progression in an aggregated manner for students from IMD Q1 and Q2 (IMD Q12) compared with those from IMD Q3, Q4 and Q5 (IMD Q345).

For part time IMD Q12 students compared with IMD Q345 students, the progression gap has fluctuated over the five years of data, with a 0.3 pp gap change over the period (insufficient survey respondents in year 3 meant no data was available). In years 2 and 4, IMD Q12 students progressed better than IMD Q345 students and, in year 4, the gap between the two groups was statistically significant (-21.4 pp) with students from the more disadvantaged areas performing far better in terms of progression. However, the gap swung to 9.5 pp in year 5 when progression of IMD Q345 students spiked at 96.6%. Such a sizeable change is likely to be explained by small numbers of students and this in turn may influence the gap between IMD Q12 and IMD Q345. Therefore, progression of part time students from IMD Q12 compared with Q345 will be monitored but no immediate action taken.

#### 2.1.2.6 Progression - Students from Areas of Low Participation (POLAR4 quintiles)

Progression of full time B&FC students from POLAR4 Q1 was higher than from Q5 in all three years of available data. The progression gap between the two groups increased from -1.1 pp in year 2 to -22.1 pp in year 4 (the most recent data) showing that Q1 students not only progress better than Q5 students at B&FC but are increasing the extent to which they do so.

To supplement this analysis, the gap between progression of full time students from Q12 and Q345 was also considered and this showed an interesting shift. In year 1, Q345 students progressed slightly better than Q12 students. However, a gap change of -8.2 pp between years 1 and 5 results from a gradual increase in progression for Q12 students. Whilst both Q12 and Q345 students saw a drop in progression in year 2, the trend since that year has been for Q12 students to progress better year on year and in year 5 Q12 student progression was 67.5%

compared with 59.6% for Q345 students. Again this illustrates the impact of B&FC executing successful interventions on outcomes for students from areas of low participation and on raising aspiration in hard to reach populations.

## 2.2 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students

### 2.2.1 Access

The composition of the B&FC student body may appear different to that of the national picture, however, it aligns closely with that of the locality from which its population is largely comprised. HESA key facts<sup>7</sup> state that 20% of full time and sandwich students live at home (with parents/guardians) and ‘travel to learn’ data analysed by Education Phase in 2014 showed that just 5% of HE students travelled under 21 miles to study at HE Institutions. However, in 2016-17 and 2017-18, 66% of B&FC’s HE students were drawn from within a 20 mile local area<sup>8</sup> and an additional 11% from the rest of the North West region. Many of the remainder are cohorts from a small number of large employers and they come to us from a variety of locations including Portsmouth and Derby. B&FC is not able to influence the profile of those cohorts as they represent the workforce of the employers in question, however, equality, diversity and British values form an important part of our discussions with employers about their organisational needs.

In 2017-18 BAME students comprised only 3.8% of the full time B&FC student population. However, this is consistent with and, actually proportionally greater than, the local Blackpool population of which only 3.2% were of BAME ethnicities according to latest published information which is illustrated below. (ONS Census 2011<sup>9</sup>):

Ethnicity	Blackpool		North West		England and Wales	
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%
White	137,339	96.7%	6,361,716	90.2%	48,209,395	86.0%
Mixed	1,753	1.2%	110,891	1.6%	1,224,400	2.2%
Asian or Asian British	2,282	1.6%	437,485	6.2%	4,213,531	7.5%
Black or Black British	346	0.2%	97,869	1.4%	1,864,890	3.3%
Chinese or other	345	0.2%	44,216	0.6%	563,696	1.0%

Table 2: Office of National Statistics data showing the distribution of ethnicities in populations for Blackpool, the North West region and nationally (taken from ONS Census 2011)

The proportional distribution of ethnicities in the local Blackpool area is significantly different to that of the wider North West region and to the national demographic picture, both of which feature larger proportions of BAME students at 9.8% and 14% respectively. These percentages are taken from table 2 above (sum of persons with ethnicities within Mixed, Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British and Chinese or Other).

Due to the small sample size, disaggregation of B&FC’s BAME data is limited in some aspects of this analysis. However, regular, specific and detailed analysis informs the provision of targeted bespoke support to all students and apprentices at B&FC. This includes monitoring performance of students of different ethnicities.

For 18-year olds, the gap between the percentage of Asian individuals studying full time HE at B&FC compared with the percentage of Asian individuals in the UK population was statistically significant in all five years (i.e., the B&FC student body included a smaller proportion of Asian individuals than was representative of the UK population). However, this gap dropped from 8.2 pp in year 4 to 4.1 pp in year 5. The gap was also significant in three out of five years for part time students with a significant drop between year 4 and year 5. We believe the gap is explained by the small percentage of Asian students at B&FC (1.2% in year 5) which reflects the small percentage of individuals of that ethnicity in the local Blackpool population (1.6%). This is significantly lower than nationally (7.5%)<sup>10</sup>.

Similarly, the gap between the percentage of full time 18-year old Black individuals at B&FC compared with Black individuals in the UK population was statistically significant across all five

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/where-study>

<sup>8</sup> Calculation: Number of B&FC HE students from FY and PR2, 3 and 4 postcodes / All B&FC HE students

<sup>9</sup> ONS Census 2011

<sup>10</sup> ONS Census 2011

years with the B&FC population containing a smaller proportion. Whilst the gap has reduced to 2.9 pp in year 5, the change was not significant. For part time students, the gap has remained unchanged at 3.6 pp throughout the period. Whilst this comparison clearly shows that the B&FC student body is not representative of the national population (3.3% of which is Black<sup>9</sup>), the proportion of Black individuals overall at B&FC (0.8%) is significantly greater than in the local Blackpool population (0.2%).

There were significant gaps between the percentage of B&FC students (aged 18) who had Mixed ethnicity and the same group in the UK population

- for full time students in years 1, 2 and 3, and
- for part time students in years 1, 2 and 5

In year 5 this gap for full time students was 1.1 pp and for part time students it was 3.2 pp. In addition, there were significant gaps in all five years between full time *and* part time B&FC students (aged 18) with ethnicity of 'Other' compared with the same group in the UK population. The gap in year 5 for both full time and part time was 1.1 pp because no students from these groups studied HE at B&FC in that year.

B&FC will disaggregate and monitor access by students from different ethnicities, with a focus on progression into HE from our FE provision. Although our objective in this area is not listed as a specific target in this plan, it will receive considerable focus. We will make every effort to ensure that the our student body includes greater proportions of BAME individuals than does the local population. In addition, B&FC plans to invest up to £135,000 in a new scholarship to encourage increased participation and retention of BAME individuals. This scholarship will be promoted in schools and the community from 2020.

## 2.2.2 Success

### 2.2.2.1 Continuation

It is difficult to assess and compare the continuation of students of individual ethnicities due to small volumes of students of Black, Asian, Mixed and Other ethnicities. Therefore, we have assessed BAME students as an aggregated group for this part of the analysis. The gap between the continuation of full time White and BAME students at B&FC was significant at -7.6 pp in year 5 when continuation was higher for BAME students (91.5%) than for White students (83.9%). However, as the gap has fluctuated considerably over the 5 year period, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions so we will continue to monitor this area closely and take action if required. Part time BAME student volumes at B&FC were small and, hence, no continuation data is available for analysis.

### 2.2.2.2 Attainment

As is the case for continuation, student volumes of under-represented ethnicities are too small to assess their attainment individually and so we assess BAME students as an aggregate group for this measure. Full time BAME students have consistently achieved lower attainment than their white peers and the gap between the two groups has widened since year 2 from 8.1 pp to a statistically significant 28.8 pp in year 5. A target (PTS\_4) has been set within this plan to eliminate this gap by 2025.

Although the small number of Level 6 BAME students who graduate annually makes trend analysis more challenging, as outlined in the objectives and targets of this plan, B&FC is committed to eliminating the gap. Improved disaggregation of data, commencing in 2020-21, will enable B&FC to better monitor progress and to forecast outcomes for this group of students in order to optimise the impact of activity.

Due to low numbers of part time BAME students at B&FC, there is no attainment data available for consideration.

### 2.2.2.3 Progression (into highly skilled employment or higher level study)

As for other measures, BAME students are assessed here as an aggregate group due to low numbers of students of the individual ethnicities.



The gap between the progression of full time White and BAME students reduced from 13.7 pp in year 1 to 3.7 pp in year 4. Where available, data shows that students of BAME ethnicities are still tending to progress less well than their White peers. No gap data is available for part time students of BAME ethnicities due to a combination of low student volumes and low survey response rates for this group. Due to the limitations of the data, this will be an area to monitor. Should any gaps trends emerge, targets will be set in order to eliminate them by 2025.

## 2.3 Mature students

### 2.3.1 Access

The proportional distribution of students across the different age groups is very different at B&FC than in the overall HE sector, with a broader spread of age groups accessing HE, the majority being over the age of 21. The graphs below highlight the 2017-18 differences between the age groups accessing HE at B&FC compared with the sector as a whole:

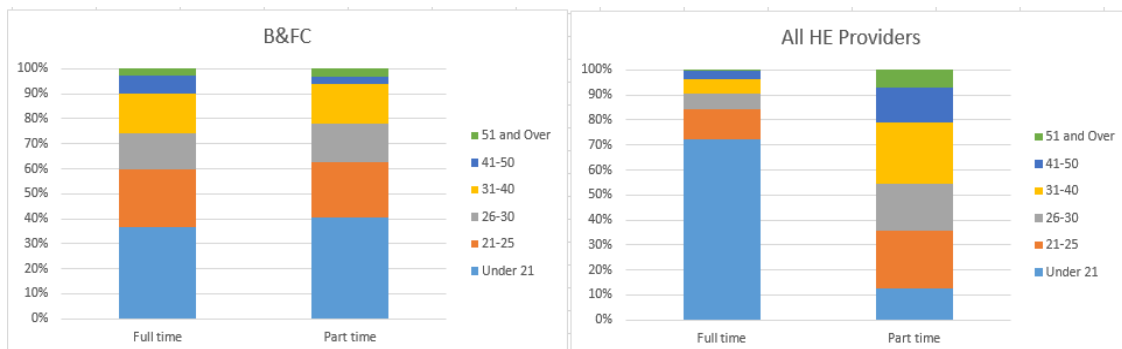


Figure 5: Illustration of the differing age profile of students at B&FC compared with the sector as a whole

At B&FC, the gap between the percentage of young students (under 21 years) studying HE compared with mature students was statistically significant across all years for both full time and part time students studying first degrees and for full time students studying other degrees. In all cases, mature students formed the higher percentage and, in year 5, the gap between the two was 26.8 pp for full time undergraduates and 18.3 pp for part time undergraduates. In addition, the change in gap from year 1 to year 5 was also statistically significant in all cases except full time students studying Other degrees. In the case of full time undergraduates studying first degrees, this was a result of a gradual decrease in numbers of young students.

### 2.3.2 Success

#### 2.3.2.1 Continuation

Full time young students (aged under 21) at B&FC saw lower levels of continuation than mature students (aged over 21) and, although the gap reduced to 3.5 pp in year 5, it was significant in year 4 at 5.0 pp. The gap for part time young versus mature students was statistically significant in years 1, 2 and 5, ranging from 2.1 pp to 16.8 pp across the five-year period. In year 5 it was 14.9 pp and the change between years 4 and 5 was statistically significant. Although volumes are small (approximately 200 per year) and limited largely to HNC Engineering courses, a target (PTS\_2) has been set to eliminate this gap.

In general, young students have better continuation than mature students on part time courses at B&FC but worse continuation on full time courses. Further analysis does not immediately suggest that the gap is notably greater for any specific age group of part time students over the age of 21. However, there are statistically significant gaps in continuation between part time young students and students aged 21-25 for years 1, 2 and 5 and for students aged 31-40 for years 2 and 5. As volumes of part time young students at B&FC are low we will closely monitor this gap over the lifetime of the plan, and will develop our reporting and analysis from 2020 to consider performance in more detail across the different age groups in order to implement appropriate interventions and a target from 2021 to reduce the gap should any trend become evident.

### 2.3.2.2 Attainment

The gap between the attainment of full time young (under 21 years) and mature (over 21 years) students has followed a largely consistent trajectory over the five year period, changing from -6.0 pp in year 1 to 7.8 pp in year 5. This 13.8 pp gap change between years 1 and 5 is statistically significant and indicates that, since year 4, attainment has been greater for full time young students than for full time mature students, a shift from earlier years in which mature students enjoyed greater attainment than young students. A target (PTS\_5) has been set within this plan to eliminate this gap by 2025.

Further analysis suggests the attainment gap between full time young students and students aged 21-25 may be an area for further focus as the gap was statistically significant at 16.7 pp in year 5 having changed by 21.4 pp over the five-year period of data, a change which was also statistically significant. Since we have set a target to eliminate the gap in attainment between young and mature students, it is likely the gap for 21-25 year olds will be addressed within that activity. We will monitor attainment to ensure this is the case and may set a target for 21-25 year olds should the gap not narrow naturally as a result of other activity. Volumes of part time students were too low to provide any insight at all for this measure.

### 2.3.2.3 Progression (into highly skilled employment or higher level study)

Progression of mature students is higher than that of young students. Since the under-represented group is performing better in this case, we do not feel any additional focus is necessary.

The gap between the progression of part time young and part time mature students fluctuated over the five years between -13.6 pp in year 2 (which was statistically significant) and 10.9 pp in year 4. In year 5 it was 7.0 pp. This range appears broad, however the fluctuation was inconsistent, and may be a result of small student volumes along with even smaller volumes participating in the survey. Nevertheless, young students enjoyed higher levels of progression in years 4 and 5. Whilst we do not intend to set a formal measurable target for this group, B&FC remains committed to ensuring high levels of progression for all students many of whom are employed. In their final year of study, we will increase activity to increase their chances of successful outcomes and career advancement.

## 2.4 Disabled students

### 2.4.1 Access

The percentage of disabled students studying full time HE programmes at B&FC has been higher than across the HE sector for every one of the 5 years but this difference has narrowed from -11.4 pp to only -2.1 pp in year 5 with a sizable drop between years 4 and 5.

Conversely, for part time students the percentage has been below that of the general HE sector with the difference broadening from 0.9 pp to 9.3 pp in year 5. The change in gap between percentages of disabled and non-disabled students at B&FC was significant both between years 4 and 5 and from year 1 to year 5. This suggests that B&FC is failing to recruit sufficient numbers of disabled students to part time courses. However, numbers of part time students are generally low and the number of disabled part time students dropped 60% between years 4 to 5 (25 to 10 students respectively). Such low volumes can mean that minor differences appear as significant changes and this makes data vulnerable to misinterpretation. Therefore, we will perform detailed analysis of the profile of our part time student body and will make this an area of focus for our Learning, Teaching & Equality Committee in 2019-20 and 2020-21. The Committee will consider in detail what specific action is required to address the under-recruitment of part time disabled students should this apparent trend persist. The aim would be to bring access at B&FC to within 1.0 pp of access across the HE sector by 2024-25.

The percentage of full time students studying HE at B&FC with sensory, medical or physical impairment was double that of the HE sector in every year (4.4% compared with 2.3% in year 5). However, the percentage of part time students with the same disabilities has been reducing

since year 3 and, in year 5, was 1.2% compared with 2.7% in the sector as a whole so we will monitor this through more detailed data from 2020.

The percentage of full time students with cognitive or learning difficulties was consistently more than 20% higher at B&FC than the sector. The percentage of part time students with the same disabilities, whilst higher than the sector, has seen a reduction over the five years whilst the percentage across the sector is slowly increasing. Again we will monitor this through more disaggregated data and will decide whether any action is required by 2022.

The percentage of full time HE students with social or communication impairment was at least 20% higher at B&FC than in the HE sector across all five years and has been more than 50% higher since year 3 therefore no action is required.

For full time students with mental health conditions, the gap between B&FC and the HE sector has changed between years 1 and year 5 when, for the first time, the percentage of full time students with mental health conditions across the sector exceeds that at B&FC. The percentage of part time students with mental health conditions at B&FC remains consistently below that across the HE sector and that gap has been increasing since year 2. B&FC has recently introduced a range of measures to support mental wellbeing and we will monitor this area to ensure those measures have the impact we expect on participation, retention and outcomes for students in this group.

Over the lifetime of this plan, B&FC will continue to develop systems and initiatives to monitor and encourage the disclosure of disabilities by both full time and part time HE students at B&FC.

## 2.4.2 Success

### 2.4.2.1 Continuation

The gap at B&FC between the continuation of full time students with a disability and those without has shifted over the five-year period from 7.8 pp to -2.4 pp in year 5 when disabled students continued better than non-disabled students. The change in this gap between year 1 to 5 demonstrates that interventions put in place at B&FC, such as inclusive teaching practices and wrap around support, have been successful in removing retention barriers for disabled students. The gap in continuation of part time disabled students compared with non-disabled students spiked in year 4, rising from 5.2 pp to 34.0 pp before dropping again in year 5 to 1.6 pp. It is not possible to identify a trend from this variable data but we will closely monitor to see if year 4 was anomalous, possibly due to small student numbers.

When comparing the continuation of full time B&FC students who have cognitive or learning difficulties with students with the same characteristics across the HE sector, B&FC students have seen poorer continuation. However, the difference in continuation between the two groups has generally been reducing (11.0 pp in year 1 to 4.6 pp in year 5) as continuation of B&FC students steadily increases. Despite the improvements in continuation over time, this remains an area for further focus at B&FC as we develop increasingly differentiated interventions to support our students.

Data is not available for part time students as the number is below 20.

### 2.4.2.2 Attainment

The gap between attainment (Level 6 students obtaining 1sts and 2:1's) of full time B&FC students with a disability and those without has increased from 1.3 pp in year 1 to a statistically significant 13.2 pp in year 5. Whilst the change over those years was not in itself statistically significant at 11.9 pp, this area warrants further scrutiny and we have defined a target (PTS\_6) to eliminate the attainment gap between these groups. It is not possible to analyse this measure for part time students because these students numbered fewer than 20 per year.

Attainment of full time B&FC students with cognitive or learning difficulties has decreased from 68.3% to 51.1% over the five years whilst attainment of similar students across the HE sector has increased slightly from 70% to 75.3%. For full time students with mental health conditions,

attainment at B&FC is also generally much lower than across the HE sector and the difference between the two in years 4 and 5 was well over 20.0 pp. Our target (PTS\_6) to improve attainment of disabled students will have a positive impact on this group and improved insight from more detailed data will enable us to monitor and plan interventions to support them further.

Overall the attainment of disabled students at B&FC is an area of focus. We will continue activity to encourage greater disclosure of disabilities and will invest in a research project to establish possible reasons for lower attainment in this student group in order to address them.

#### 2.4.2.3 Progression (into highly skilled employment or higher level study)

The gap between the progression of full time B&FC students with a disability and those without had increased by year 5 to 9.7 pp, which is statistically significant. The rate of change of that gap was not significant either from year 1 to 5 or from year 4 to 5. However, given the importance of this measure, and the size of the gap in year 5, a target (PTP\_1) has been included in this plan to eliminate this gap by 2025. A research project will be funded in order to identify specific barriers to progression for this student group and this work will inform our future actions to support disabled students in achieving higher levels of progression. Volumes of part time students were too low to yield any analysis.

There is also a statistically significant gap (24.0 pp in year 5) between the progression of full time students without disabilities (68.5%) and those with mental health conditions (44.4%). We expect our college-wide focus on mental wellbeing to drive up progression rates for these students and will monitor their progression to ensure this is the case.

Full time B&FC students with sensory, medical and physical impairments saw higher progression than similar students in the HE sector in years 1, 2 and 3. However, progression for that group at B&FC has reduced significantly in years 4 and 5. Alongside a gradual increase in progression across the sector, this means that B&FC students with sensory, medical and physical impairments are now underperforming in comparison. Conversely, progression of full time B&FC students with cognitive or learning difficulties is on the increase at a faster rate than the increase across the HE sector and this is tending to reduce the difference in progression between those two groups, although B&FC data is not available in year 3, due to a low survey response rate. Our target (PTP\_1) to drive up progression for disabled students will positively influence these groups and we will focus on detailed analysis to target individualised support where needed to remove barriers to their progression.

It is not possible to analyse progression of part time students with disabilities due to low student numbers.

## 2.5 Care leavers

### 2.5.1 Access

In 2016-17, eight of our HE students identified themselves as care leavers, rising to thirteen in 2017-18 and eighteen in 2018-19. Analysis of internal data in 2016 showed that low numbers of students were identifying as care leavers and these low numbers failed to align with our knowledge of the local area which includes high rates of looked after children. As a result, we have developed a package of financial and other tailored support as part of a drive to encourage disclosure by this and other under-represented groups. The package of support was widely advertised and has started to have an impact with small increases in number of care leavers since that time. Whilst these groups continue to represent low numbers, we anticipate further increases over the coming years as we continually refine the support package and raise awareness across high schools and employers.

The number of students at B&FC who are young carers or identified to have no contact with their families (i.e. are estranged) is small. However, if we aggregate these two groups, the number of students increased from fourteen in 2017-18 to twenty in 2018-19, an increase of 43%. All of these students received a package of wrap-around support from the College's HE

Learning Mentors and approximately 80% of them received additional financial support from B&FC's Access Scholarship<sup>11</sup>.

## 2.5.2 Success

### 2.5.2.1 Continuation

Cohort retention<sup>12</sup>, the measure which has been used predominantly at B&FC rather than continuation, has generally been high for this cohort, as has attendance. Retention in the 2017-8 academic year was 69% for care leavers, 100% for carers and 90% for estranged students. Targeted activity will continue to support access, success and progression for this group. In addition, the measure of continuation will be replicated and reported in future years as well as retention (see below). If retention (and, later, continuation) remains lower for any of these groups than for the rest of our HE students, this will become a focus for our HE Learning Mentors (HELMs) who will be tasked, in 2020-21, with research and action to ensure this changes by 2023-24.

### 2.5.2.2 Attainment and Progression

Whilst B&FC has analysed and monitored access, attendance, retention and achievement (including high grades)<sup>13</sup> for these students for several years, our reporting has not previously included the specific OfS methodologies for attainment and progression. In 2017-18, achievement was 62% for care leavers, 100% for young carers and 70% for estranged students. In 2019-20, B&FC will begin to enrich its reporting and monitoring to provide in-year forecasting which in turn will facilitate earlier, more specific interventions for these under-represented groups. If outcomes such as achievement (and, later, attainment) continue to be lower than for the rest of our HE students, this will be addressed by ascertaining key barriers to success for these students and setting specific action-orientated targets to remove them by 2023-24.

Our plan is to replicate the OfS methodologies for both continuation and attainment and to be in a position to report on these for under-represented groups, included care leavers, by August 2020. Similarly, we will report on progression of care leavers and other under-represented groups during the 2021-22 academic year (this measure pending Graduate Outcome Survey data becoming available).

## 2.6 Intersections of characteristics of disadvantage

We have examined all the intersections of characteristics provided by the OfS dataset and have identified those intersections which lead to significant gaps in measures. It is our intention to closely monitor and scrutinise these intersections during the lifetime of this plan with interventions being introduced as indicated.

The data confirms lower continuation of males from IMD Q12 compared with those from IMD Q345 and this accords with research<sup>14</sup> on differential outcomes for male students. The gap between the two groups was statistically significant in year 1 (6.1 pp) and was 2.8 pp in year 5. When comparing part time males, those from IMD Q12 had better continuation than those from IMD Q345 in year 1 but this changed in year 2 and the gap had become statistically significant by year 4 following an increase of 16.4 pp between year 1 and year 5. Small student numbers may be causing inconsistencies in this data so we will monitor this area closely to establish whether there is a gap and will, if appropriate, set a target by 2021.

Similarly, the gap between attainment rates for full time IMD Q12 male students and IMD Q345 male students, whilst not statistically significant, ranges from 9.4 pp to 9.2 pp in year 5 although it was -12.1 pp in year 4 when males from IMD Q12 saw better attainment than those from IMD Q345.

Full time IMD Q12 female students also saw lower attainment than IMD Q345 females and this gap was statistically significant in four of the five years widening to 21.1 pp in year 5. This same

<sup>11</sup> Refer to Financial Support section of this plan for further details

<sup>12</sup> Retention is the percentage of students who, having started a course, are due to finish it in the given year and do so without withdrawing

<sup>13</sup> Achievement is the percentage of students who, having started a course, are due to finish it in the given year and who pass the course

<sup>14</sup> For example, Hillman and Robinson Boys to Men: The underachievement of young men in higher education – and how to start tackling it  
Nick Hillman and Nicholas Robinson. HEPI Report 84

group of students saw lower continuation than Q345 females, a gap which was statistically significant in years 1 and 3 for all undergraduates. Given that the gap has been lower in years 4 and 5, B&FC will continue to closely monitor the comparative performance of these groups across the life time of the plan and will establish targets and interventions as required. The ambitious target set to eliminate the gap in attainment between full time students from IMD Q1 and Q5 will have a positive impact on this gap (see also page 7 and Figure 4).

The percentage progression of male full time students from IMD Q1 & 2 has been greater than for IMD Q345 males with a gap of 3.5 pp between the two groups in year 5. Progression data for part time students shows a statistically significant difference of 31.8 pp in year 4 between males from IMD Q1 & Q2 and those from IMD Q3, Q4 & Q5. However, with rounding of relatively small student volumes in this category, a small change can have a significant impact and this is the most likely explanation.

## 2.7 Other groups who may experience barriers in higher education

Taking into consideration GDPR and giving due consideration to disclosure, B&FC will explore the following areas, which are also relevant to our context:

- The LGBT+ Community - Blackpool has one of the largest LGBT+ communities in the UK<sup>15</sup> with approximately 10% of the local population identifying as LGBT+. At B&FC we have already developed in our student record system the potential to record and monitor this information from 2019-20
- Children from military families - we plan to monitor this information from 2019-20
- Single parents – Blackpool is home to some of the most disadvantaged families in the country

## 3. Strategic aims, objectives and targets

### 3.1 Overarching strategic aims

B&FC's strategic aim as an anchor institution within the community is to continue to raise aspiration and to ensure that every student who chooses to study with us develops the knowledge, skills and behaviours to facilitate positive progression. With a strong record in widening participation, reducing barriers to entry and facilitating success for students from under-represented groups, we are very clear that every individual student's journey is unique, and that it is often at the intersection of a complex of circumstances that students may not achieve their full potential. Therefore, our objectives over the life of this plan are:

- 1) To continue to identify, prioritise, address and reduce any significant gaps in access, success and progression for under-represented groups through the development of student analytics which mirror the OfS Access and Participation performance measures
- 2) To further develop and promote a socially inclusive and accessible College for the recruitment of staff and students, by in-year and end of year analysis and through targeting of disadvantaged or under-represented groups
- 3) To enhance successful progression (to highly skilled employment and further study) and to ensure further focus on employability and careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) are a priority focus for all our target groups. A strategic focus will build on the government's Careers Strategy<sup>16</sup> published in December 2017 that incorporates the findings of the Gatsby review, and will feature further embedding of B&FC's employability award, Degree Plus. By 2025, B&FC aim to have significantly increased participation in DegreePlus, to 100 students, completing the award which is recorded on their electronic transcript

The analysis of current performance indicates that progress is being made in a number of areas, through a range of constantly evolving interventions. However, we have yet to fully realise all our ambitions. The overarching focus of our activity from 2020 to 2025, will be enhancing our reporting and student data analytics to make increasingly enriched student data accessible at

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.bfwh.nhs.uk/our-services/hospital-services/alcohol-liason-nurse-service/advice-for-the-lgbt-community/>

<sup>16</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/664319/Careers\\_strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664319/Careers_strategy.pdf)

a more granular level. This will be used to triangulate with quantitative and qualitative data collected pre- and post-activity to generate sophisticated insight and evaluation, to identify further opportunities for enhancement and to provide evidence of impact.

Planned enhancements to internal intelligence from January 2020 will provide more sophisticated reporting and will allow disaggregation which aligns with OfS measures. B&FC have monitored access, attendance, retention and achievement data of students with different characteristics for many years. However, by 2021, the disaggregation and presentation of this information will see substantial enhancements such that visual representations and trends analysis are available to senior management and, for more detailed analysis, to curriculum and service areas. Where trends are statistically significant, interventions will be employed to reduce and close gaps.

In addition, B&FC will replicate the specific methodologies (e.g., for attainment) so that performance of under-represented groups can be monitored more effectively. These data will be reviewed by the existing B&FC Learning, Teaching and Equality Committee (LTEC) at key points in the academic year. Where appropriate, the Access & Participation Planning Group will develop clear, measurable targets within a comprehensive action plan intended to address any gaps or negative trends. Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of planned activities will be through the LTEC. It may be more challenging to replicate the methodology for progression and continuation because those measures incorporate external data not all of which are available in year. However, those calculations will be replicated as far as possible and will be included in the ongoing monitoring. Data analytics will be used to enhance targets outlined below.

### 3.2 Target groups, Targets and Aims

Based on the current assessment of our performance we have set stretching and ambitious outcomes-focused “targets” for the lifespan of this A&P plan along with some broader “aims” which represent areas for attention but are not formal OfS “targets” in the Targets and Investment Plan. Our accompanying Targets and Investment Plan provides annual milestones for each target showing intended yearly progress. Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan, as outlined in section 7 will ensure we consider our performance against these annual milestones. Recommendations will be made to the Board on steps to be taken if the College is not making the yearly progress needed to achieve our targets by 2024-25.

**3.2.1 Access:** Based on our analysis of performance, our primary target groups for access are students from areas of deprivation (POLAR4 Q1 - full time and part time; IMD Q1 - part time), BAME individuals, care leavers, young carers and estranged students.

3.2.1.1 Target: Eliminate access gap to full time HE for individuals from PQ1

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
PTA_1	Eliminate difference between percentage of B&FC full time 18 year old student population from PQ1 compared with the UK 18 year old population	2017-18	5.6pp	5.0pp	4.0pp	3.0pp	1.5pp	0.0pp

3.2.1.2 Target: Reduce access gap to part time HE for individuals from PQ1

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
PTA_2	Reduce difference between percentage B&FC part time 18 year old student population from PQ1 compared with the UK 18 year old population	2017-18	14.9pp	14.0pp	12.0pp	10.0pp	8.0pp	6.0pp

3.2.1.3 Target: Eliminate access gap to part time HE for individuals from IMD Q1 compared with IMD Q5

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
PTA_3	Eliminate difference between percentage B&FC part time students from IMD Q1 compared with IMD Q5	2017-18	8.0pp	7.0pp	5.0pp	3.0pp	1.5pp	0.0pp

3.2.1.4 Aim: Improve access for care leavers, young carers and estranged students to better mirror the volumes in the local population

3.2.1.5 Aim: Improve participation of BAME individuals to at least 4% by 2025

3.2.1.5 Aim: B&FC will also closely monitor participation of students from other under-represented groups and will begin to explore disclosure, access and progress across the life cycle of the following as discussed in 2.7 above:

- The LGBT+ community
- Children from military families
- Single parents

**3.2.2 Continuation:** Based on our analysis of performance, our primary target groups for continuation activity are mature students studying part time courses, part time male students from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 and care leavers. Our targets and aims are as follows:

3.2.2.1 Target: Eliminate continuation gap between part time male students from IMD Q1 & 2 and IMD Q 3, 4 and 5

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
PTS_1	Reduce to zero the percentage point difference in continuation between part time male students from IMD Q1 & 2 and IMD Q 3, 4 and 5	2016-17	12.9pp	12.0pp	10.0pp	7.0pp	4.0pp	0.0pp

3.2.2.2 Target: Eliminate continuation gap between part time mature and young students

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
PTS_2	Reduce to zero the percentage point difference in continuation between part time mature and young students	2016-17	14.9pp	12.0pp	10.0pp	6.0pp	3.0pp	0.0pp

3.2.2.3 Aim: Eliminate any continuation gap identified for care leavers, young carers and estranged students. By 2025, we aim to improve retention of each of these groups to 92.5%

3.2.2.4 Aim: Identify and eliminate any continuation gap identified for part time disabled students

3.2.2.4 Aim: Following research undertaken at B&FC, and drawing upon literature<sup>17</sup> our aim is to remove recognised barriers to retaining students from the following groups:

- Under 25s, living independently without financial or emotional support
- Non-care-leavers with a background in care and broken-down family networks
- Ex-carers - whose long-term caring duties have ceased due to bereavement
- Single parents

**3.2.3 Attainment:** Based on our analysis of performance, our primary target groups are full time mature students, disabled students, BAME students and those drawn from areas of deprivation (IMD Q1). Our focus will be to eliminate the attainment gap between these groups and their peers by 2025, whilst preventing grade inflation. Specific targets and aims are:

3.2.3.1 Target: Eliminate attainment gap between full time students from IMD Q1 and IMD Q5

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
PTS_3	Reduce to zero the percentage point difference between full time students from IMDQ1 and Q5s achieving 1sts and 2:1's	2017-18	29.4pp	25.0pp	20.0pp	14.0pp	7.0pp	0.0pp

<sup>17</sup>The 'Moving On Up' report is the first study to provide an overall picture of care leavers in higher education <https://www.nnecl.org/resources/moving-on-up-report?topic=guides-and-toolkits>  
 Department for Education, (17 May 2018) news story 'New support for young care leavers starting an apprenticeship'. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-support-for-young-care-leavers-starting-an-apprenticeship>  
 Student Finance England (January 2018) 'Students meeting the definition of 'care leaver' for mainstream student finance purposes'<https://www.practitioners.sl.c.o.uk/exchange-blog/2018/january/student-finance-for-care-leavers/>  
 Department for Education (1 October 2018) news story, 'Government launches new collaboration with Barnardo's to support care leavers into work', <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-new-collaboration-with-barnardos-to-support-care-leavers-into-work>



### 3.2.3.2 Target: Eliminate attainment gap between full time BAME and white students

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
PTS_4	Reduce to zero the percentage point difference between full time BAME and white students achieving 1sts and 2:1's	2017-18	28.8pp	25.0pp	20.0pp	15.0pp	5.0pp	0.0pp

### 3.2.3.3 Target: Eliminate attainment gap between full time mature and young students

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
PTS_5	Reduce to zero the percentage point difference between full time young and mature students achieving 1sts and 2:1's	2017-18	7.8pp	7.0pp	5.5pp	4.0pp	2.0pp	0.0pp

### 3.2.3.4 Target: Eliminate attainment gap between full time students with a disability and those without

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
PTS_6	Reduce to zero the percentage point difference between full time disabled and non-disabled students achieving 1sts and 2:1's	2017-18	13.2pp	12.0pp	9.0pp	6.0pp	3.0pp	0.0pp

### 3.2.3.5 Aim: Assess, monitor and address any attainment gaps identified for students aged 21-25

### 3.2.3.6 Aim: Eliminate any attainment gap identified for care leavers, young carers and estranged students

## 3.2.4 Progression: Based on our analysis of performance, our primary target groups for progression-related activity will be full time disabled students. Related targets and aims are:

### 3.2.4.1 Target: Eliminate progression gap between full time students with disability and those without

Target	Target Description	Baseline Year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones				
				2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
PTP_1	Reduce to zero the percentage point difference between full time disabled and non-disabled students progressing to highly skilled employment or higher level study	2016-17	9.7pp	9.0pp	8.0pp	6.0pp	3.0pp	0.0pp

### 3.2.4.2 Aim: Eliminate any progression gap for care leavers, young carers and estranged students

## 4. Strategic measures

### 4.1 Whole provider strategic approach

#### 4.1.1 Policy, Mission and Approach

Facilitating access and widening participation is integral to Blackpool and The Fylde College's ethos, mission and higher education strategy, ensuring that everyone with the desire to benefit from higher education has an equal opportunity to do so. We embrace a responsive approach designed to unlock potential, embedding inclusivity and supporting under-represented groups to facilitate equal opportunity and social mobility.

Commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is a central tenet of pedagogic practice and academic governance. Our Equality and Diversity Statement 2016-2020<sup>18</sup> details our commitments as a college to respect and value differences in age, disability (including physical and mental impairment), gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation – the protected characteristics specified in the Equality Act 2010. B&FC's four E&D key objectives are:

1. continue to identify, prioritise, address and reduce any significant gaps in retention, achievement, progression and destination, between groups of learners

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.blackpool.ac.uk/sites/default/files/related-documents/Equality%20Statement%202016-2020%20\\_0.pdf](https://www.blackpool.ac.uk/sites/default/files/related-documents/Equality%20Statement%202016-2020%20_0.pdf)

2. develop and promote a socially inclusive and accessible College for the recruitment of staff and students (through analysis and targeting of disadvantaged or under-represented groups)
3. ensure equality and diversity continue to be developed within the curriculum and all discrimination, bullying or harassment is challenged
4. work with employers, the local community and nationally to raise the College profile as a leader in the field of equality and diversity

#### 4.1.2 Intelligence and Insight

Since the data identifies that B&FC is performing above the overall HE population in many areas, much of our activity and investment will relate to enhancing student data analytics to provide data on a more granular level. To better understand and predict personal learning needs and performance, B&FC will introduce predictive analytics providing more holistic data to inform impact evaluations and support greater understanding of how resources can be used in the most effective way. This will be triangulated with quantitative and qualitative data to highlight further opportunities for enhancement. We will invest in an internal data warehouse fed by traditional data sources by December 2019. This will allow B&FC to develop tools which provide deeper insight by the end of 2020 after which additional data sources will be included to generate insights that will help us to predict and, hence, influence, likely outcomes by 2022.

In addition, data will be drawn from a variety of new intern sources. We will invest in a research project to establish likely barriers to student success for specific groups and, from 2020-21, programme leaders will enrich monitoring documents (e.g., programme reviews) with diversity detail about their student groups to inform the intelligence we develop and to make visible the differentiation required in delivery and support.

#### 4.1.3 Other Strategic Measures

Other measures to effect the changes required will involve continuing existing successful programmes along with a more disaggregated approach to understanding individual student needs. Pre and on-programme support will be a key focus. A holistic suite of supportive interventions is currently delivered via a partnership approach involving delivery and support teams. This approach will be further enhanced. Our improved student analytics will generate insight into specific combinations of characteristics and needs which will help us provide increasingly individualised interventions with maximum impact. It is at the intersection of a complex of conditions and circumstances that some students may not reach their full potential and these enhancements to our support packages by 2022 will recognise these barriers.

B&FC will continue to take a collaborative approach to removing barriers for different individuals where this allows us to offer more nuanced or holistic support. The principles of engaging with third-sector leaders is aligned to our commitment to raise the aspirations of under-represented groups. B&FC has strong relationships with the local Rotary Club, women's refuges, homeless, youth and community charities as well a children's and families centres. This enables us to support under-represented groups within community settings, which enhances trusting and meaningful intervention. We will further engage these third parties to enrich the support we can offer in a meaningful way.

## 4.2. Specific Measures to address Access Gaps

Target groups for access: Students from areas of deprivation, specifically

- From POLAR4 Q1 studying full time or part time courses
- From IMD Q1 studying part time courses
- Care leavers, young carers and estranged students

#### 4.2.1 Partnerships and Collaborative Working

Sustainable, collaborative relationships with a range of partners ensure that B&FC students already benefit from best value, enhanced opportunities, relevant experiences and successful, meaningful outreach opportunities. Our mature partnership with Lancaster University and other HEIs and FECs raise aspiration and attainment regionally and nationally through groups such

as the Mixed Economy Group of large colleges, Collabco and the Association of Colleges (AoC).

To address the targets outlined in Section 3.2.1, B&FC will forge even stronger collaborations with schools, Pupil Referral Units, sixth forms, colleges, HEIs and the community in order to raise aspiration and attainment across the area. Relationships with schools will be enhanced by the active engagement of B&FC management on Boards of Governors along with existing positive relationships at senior leadership level which ensure strategic direction is collaborative and aligned to the needs of the area. A specific focus will be schools and centres whose catchment areas fall within IMD and POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2. We will also work directly with pupils and parents to build confidence and expectation by highlighting the positive outcomes from higher education. We will directly engage the parents of our FE students in college activities and will improve communications with them by introducing automated updates and electronic access to our student tracking system. Through these activities, by 2025, we will increase access to fulltime HE from POLAR4 Quintile 1 such that it is representative of the UK population (Refer to PTA\_1).

B&FC's School Liaison Team and Outreach and Widening Participation Officer already support young people, adults and the wider community in making informed choices about their future in an area of extreme deprivation. The team pro-actively provides information and advice about study routes and pathways to success. It will increase its work with primary schools, whose pupils come from some of the most disadvantaged postcodes, through the Children's University initiative and with Children's Centres across Blackpool. B&FC's Principal and CEO has been Blackpool Children's University<sup>19</sup> Vice Chancellor since 2013 facilitating clear links with B&FC and investing in graduation ceremonies to further build awareness and generate impact. This work is of strategic importance to B&FC as highlighted in the theory of change diagram in Appendix A.

The Lancashire National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) data provides analysis of students who are capable of progressing to higher education but who experience barriers to doing so. This intelligence is already facilitating interventions to support participation. Through the NCOP outreach hubs, we will enhance this work in order to support widening access for the under-represented groups across our region. We will make increasingly better use of available data through our analytics developments and will share details of outreach opportunities. In time, specific aims will be developed from this work as we gain insight from a much wider information set including Regional outreach mapping and countywide data on HE progression.

We are additionally already involved in funded projects to raise the profile of HE level apprenticeships across the region in engineering and leadership. We will further enrich our work with employers, many of whom are based in or near areas of deprivation. This work will encourage wider access to apprenticeships and part time courses from under-represented groups.

#### 4.2.2. Internal Progression

Several thousand young people study further education and apprenticeships at B&FC. Targeted interventions will be enhanced to ensure that these students receive support and guidance to facilitate progression into HE. The introduction of T levels in 2020 will provide further opportunities to progress students into HE. We will improve engagement of parents of FE student in the progress of their children and by 2025, we will increase internal progression from B&FC Level 3 FE to Level 4 HE provision by 3.0 pp.

#### 4.2.3. Support for Prospective Students

Launched in 2014-15, B&FC's 'Flying Start' Programme is delivered by our HE Learning Mentor (HELM) team who were commended in the category of Widening Access Initiative (Retention and Progression) at the NEON Awards<sup>20</sup> for this initiative. Targeting non-traditional entrants and widening participation cohorts (e.g., care leavers, mature students), the programme

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.childrensuniversity.co.uk/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.educationopportunities.co.uk/news/the-sixth-annual-neon-awards-winners-announced/>

prepares prospective students to transition into HE. It covers what to expect along with time management, research skills, academic writing and much more. Flexible dates and times facilitate maximum attendance by accommodating childcare and other commitments. The programme will develop to respond to the needs of a changing student population by enhancing targeting, increasing flexibility and offering different tiers of content and modes of attendance (e.g., digital) which support and challenge students. Hence, by 2025, B&FC will increase the number of applicants from under-represented groups who participate in 'Flying Start' summer sessions.

#### 4.2.4. Financial Investment and Support

Whilst there is limited empirical research to support the effectiveness of financial aid as a means to improve outcomes<sup>21</sup>, there is evidence that financial support affects decision-making<sup>22</sup> and some students express more debt aversion (e.g., 'those planning to live at home whilst studying (35%), those from lower socio-economic group (26%)'<sup>23</sup> and those from ethnic minorities).

Therefore, we will continue to offer 'B&FC Advantage Bursary' designed to remove barriers to participation by providing financial support for the first year on programme. This fund assists up to 300 eligible students with one-off payments of £500 and a survey of current students confirmed that it allowed them to purchase much needed study resources and equipment. Student Finance England data is used to assess eligibility and a limited number of bursaries are issued. If more applications are received than bursaries available, applications are ranked according to household income. A further filter will now be applied according to POLAR or IMD classification with preference for applicants whose home postcode is in an area of lowest participation in HE (Quintile 1).

B&FC will also continue to issue the 'Access Scholarship' which is guaranteed for care leavers, young carers and estranged students. Scholarships of £1000 per year are issued for up to 3 years of study (pro rata for part time students). They are available to new students who have been living in the UK for 5 years and are not repeating a year or on placement. Surveyed recipients confirmed that the scholarship enabled them to access study materials and equipment and to support broader living costs.

In addition, B&FC plans to invest up to £135,000 in a new scholarship to encourage increased participation and retention of BAME individuals. This scholarship will be promoted in schools and the community from 2020.

### 4.3. Specific Measures to Address Continuation Gaps

Target groups for continuation:

- Mature students studying part time courses
- Male students from IMD quintiles 1 & 2 studying part time courses
- Care leavers, young carers and estranged students

Along with aims to support:

- Under 25s, living independently without financial or emotional support
- Non-care-leavers with a background in care and broken-down family networks
- Ex-carers - whose long-term caring duties have ceased due to bereavement
- Single parents

B&FC will employ a range of measures to enhance support for students from disadvantaged and under-represented groups in an inclusive, non-discriminatory and non-stigmatised way and, hence, will address the targets outlined in Section 3.2.2.

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<sup>21</sup> Wyness, G (2016). Higher education bursaries and performance: Annual test scores, drop out and degree outcomes. [Data Collection]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive.

<sup>22</sup>What do we know about the impact of financial support on access and student success? Review of the research and evaluation of the impact of institutional financial support on access and student success. Report to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) by Nursaw Associates (March 2015).

<sup>23</sup> Fagence, S and Hansom, J for YouthSight (2018) Influence of finance on higher education decision-making. Report commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills then published by DfE.

#### 4.3.1. Tailored, Personalised, Holistic Support

Focus groups have revealed that students study at B&FC because of tailored support, personalised contact and smaller class sizes. On-programme support is a strong focus at B&FC. It incorporates the College's Partners for Success framework with curriculum and support services working in partnership to support retention (continuation) and onward progression of students.

Alongside our Flying Start programme, the HELM team will offer a wider programme of positive interventions to assist students through key transition points such as progression between levels (4 to 5 and 5 to 6). Existing workshops are split into two strands reflecting levels of confidence in attendees (e.g., in relation to critical thinking and referencing) rather than level of study. This allows level 5 and 6 students to collaborate and returning students to work at a pace suitable to them. In 2019-20 we will further enhance this work with the introduction of targeted mid-point interventions for level 4.

#### 4.3.2. Mental Wealth

B&FC supports positive mental health and resilience through its non-stigmatised concepts of 'mental wealth' and 'thriving'. The approach mirrors the Universities UK's #step change framework which advocates a whole institution approach to student mental health<sup>24</sup> echoing the 2035 vision of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition<sup>25</sup>. B&FC's Mental Wealth Strategy helps identify those experiencing emergent mental distress and low wellbeing enabling early interventions to help keep students in HE. B&FC's Resilience Tool will be a key focus going forwards. An integral part of the 'Blackpool Resilience Revolution'<sup>26</sup>, this is a collaboration with the creators of the 'Academic Resilience Framework'<sup>27</sup> and builds resilience into support structures helping students not only 'to beat the odds but also to change the odds'<sup>28</sup>. We will work to ensure that, by 2025, 60% of HE students engage with the B&FC 'Resilience Tool' each year.

B&FC will expand its programme of Mental Health First Aid Training (MHFA) which equips staff and students with the knowledge to deliver effective, timely mental health support reducing factors associated with mental ill health and supporting continuation of study.

#### 4.3.3. Support for Care Leavers, Carers and Estranged Students

We will further develop 'Succeed', B&FC's financial, study skills and wellbeing support package which supports continuation of care leavers, carers and estranged students. We have created a specific function for a "Designated Member of Staff for Looked After Children and Care Leavers" who now ensures that students receive mentoring and routine support and who liaises with social workers, support workers and councils to ensure strong communication and to optimise support opportunities. All students from this underrepresented group will also be guaranteed one to one HELM team support from application and throughout the student lifecycle.

B&FC is a Care Leaver Covenant<sup>29</sup> signatory in response to the DfE Keep on Caring strategy, pledging support to help care leavers overcome challenges to access when they begin independent living. We will build on the success of our work with Blackpool Young Carers and will collaborate with more third sector organisations to ensure our support remains specific and meaningful.

B&FC was the first English FE College to join the charity StandAlone UK and to make the StandAlone Pledge<sup>30</sup> to support young people who are studying HE without the support of a family network. These estranged students face a range of complex issues and we will continue

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/stepchange>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.cypmhc.org.uk/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.boingboing.org.uk/resilience-revolution-blackpool-headstart/>

<sup>27</sup> [www.boingboing.org.uk](http://www.boingboing.org.uk)

<sup>28</sup> Hart, Gagnon and Eryigit-Madzwamuse 2016 Uniting Resilience Research and Practice With an Inequalities Approach

<sup>29</sup> <https://mycovenant.org.uk/about/>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.thestandalonepledge.org.uk/champion-institutions>

to stand by our pledge by offering dedicated support coordinated by our specialist manager and enhancing our offer to them.

Having reviewed internal and external (National Network for the Education of Care Leavers<sup>31</sup>) research, we will also expand our current support package to include:

- Under 25s, living independently without financial or emotional support
- Those (non care leavers) with a background in care and broken-down family networks
- Ex-carers - whose long-term caring duties have ceased due to bereavement
- Single parents

#### 4.4. Specific Measures to Address Attainment Gaps

Target groups for attainment:

- Students from disadvantaged areas (IMD Q1) studying full time courses
- Students of under-represented (BAME) ethnicities studying full time courses
- Mature students studying full time courses
- Disabled students studying full time courses

Along with

- Students aged 21-25
- Care leavers, young carers and estranged students

To address the ambitious targets outlined in Section 3.2.3, B&FC will enhance a range of existing activities and introduce some which are currently in development.

##### 4.4.1. Curriculum, Pedagogy and Integrated Support

B&FC's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy<sup>32</sup> recognises that inclusive practice values and diversity actively enhance the learning experience. Acknowledging good practice in these areas is an integral element in B&FC's graded observations of teaching and learning. A vibrant CPD offer includes employee guidance about inclusive practice and drives optimal achievement to enhance attainment for under-represented groups.

Creating a culture of partnership and mutual respect is a central theme of driving attainment. B&FC's Partners for Success Framework is an integrated and collaborative approach to supporting students in achieving positive outcomes through a supportive, enabling culture which promotes a community of enquiry, excitement and engagement. Curriculum and support services to work holistically across the student lifecycle to challenge perceived ability and optimise achievement. Key partners include the Careers Team, HE Learning Mentors, Learning Resource Centres, Student Support and Wellbeing Team, curriculum teams and the students themselves.

Students choose to study at B&FC because of tailored support, personalised contact and smaller class sizes which supported them in achieving the best possible grades. Our Flying Start programme includes workshops which develop graduate skills and positive interventions which support retention and drive up achievement. We will deliver more of these workshops and will engage specifically with mature students in their final years to identify barriers to achieving the objectives required for their success. We will further develop online workshops and digital communications (e.g., BLOGs, VLOGs, podcasts) to keep these students fully focussed on their achievement and to ensure they are able to effectively engage alongside the work, family, caring or other commitments which are common for more mature students.

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<sup>31</sup>The 'Moving On Up' report is the first study to provide an overall picture of care leavers in higher education <https://www.nnecl.org/resources/moving-on-up-report?topic=guides-and-toolkits>  
Department for Education, (17 May 2018) news story 'New support for young care leavers starting an apprenticeship'.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-support-for-young-care-leavers-starting-an-apprenticeship>  
Student Finance England (January 2018) 'Students meeting the definition of 'care leaver' for mainstream student finance purposes' <https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/exchange-blog/2018/january/student-finance-for-care-leavers/>  
Department for Education (1 October 2018) news story, 'Government launches new collaboration with Barnardo's to support care leavers into work', <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-new-collaboration-with-barnardos-to-support-care-leavers-into-work>  
<sup>32</sup> [https://www.blackpool.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/bfc\\_teaching\\_learning\\_assessment\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.blackpool.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/bfc_teaching_learning_assessment_strategy.pdf)

Attainment will be further supported through our Mental Wealth Strategy, Resilience Tool and MHFA mental health first aid training. B&FC's ambition that 60% of HE students will engage with the B&FC 'Resilience Tool' by 2025 will improve attainment for under-represented groups.

#### 4.4.2. Financial Investment and Support

Students who tend to exhibit more debt aversion include those of non-white ethnicities and those from lower socio-economic group<sup>33</sup>. Mature students in HE have also been found to have more anxieties about finance and be in greater debt than younger students and to have fewer sources of information available about finance (NUS). At B&FC, we recognise that there are also unforeseen events which impact on study and can lead to distraction of focus from study thus affecting attainment.

B&FC's hardship fund will continue to support students who experience particular hardship in emergencies, providing monetary awards via individual applications assessed on a case-by-case basis by student advisers.

In 2017-18 students surveyed told us that the Advantage Bursary was primarily utilised to cover first year course costs such as equipment. We will utilise survey and interview tools from the OfS self-evaluation toolkit<sup>34</sup> from late 2019-20 and this will include students who accessed support in 2018-19 and 2019-20 enabling us to understand the impact of our support and improve it to enhance success in under-represented groups.

We plan to invest up to £135,000 in a brand new scholarship to help break down the barriers to participation and retention that BAME students encounter. Eligibility criteria will be developed to ensure this investment provides the appropriate support with course fees and the cost of studying HE.

We also plan to invest in a research project to identify the reasons for lower attainment in disabled students. The outcomes of this research will inform what action we take to increase attainment for disabled students.

### 4.5. Specific Measures to address Progression gaps

Target groups for progression:

- Disabled students studying full time courses
- Care leavers, young carers and estranged students

B&FC has well developed plans to address the targets listed in Section 3.2.4

#### 4.5.1. Employability and Skills Development

The skills demands of the future will require more than just the acquisition of knowledge and skills; meeting them will involve 'the mobilisation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to meet complex demands. Future-ready students will need both broad and specialised knowledge'<sup>35</sup>. Our current Careers and Employability Strategy will be reviewed to ensure that our students are able to fulfil their potential both now and in the future. We will further develop the B&FC Career Curriculum<sup>36</sup> and will expand and analyse the impact of DegreePlus, our employability award which captures evidence of extra-curricular activity, knowledge, skills and abilities that employers value when recruiting a dynamic, graduate workforce. Our aim is that students consistently take ownership of their own employability and career development and, hence, their progression.

We will continue our work with over 1800 employers and industry partners who offer rich work placements and employ apprentices, to co-create degrees to include the highest technical and professional skills required to secure lifelong career opportunities and meet their needs. This

<sup>33</sup> Fagence, S and Hansom, J for YouthSight (2018) Influence of finance on higher education decision-making. Report commissioned by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills then published by DfE.

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/financial-support-evaluation-toolkit/>

<sup>35</sup> The Future of Education and Skills. Education 2030. OECD position paper 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Based on the CareerEDGE model - Dacre Pool, L. and Sewell, P. (2007) The Key to Employability. Developing a practical model of graduate employability. Education and Training. 49 (4), p277-289. Available from UCLAN (Accessed May 2016)

industry-relevant curriculum will improve progression into employment and/or further study, thus truly starting to break the bonds of poor social mobility.

#### 4.5.2. Specialist Support and Careers Guidance

Our HELM support offer includes workshops to develop graduate skills such as 'self-belief' and desire to achieve; self-management skills such as accepting responsibility to improve own performance; communication and literacy skills and problem solving, all of which are valued by employers.

We will further develop and enhance our Matrix-accredited independent information, advice and guidance which is delivered by Careers Team specialists. This highly qualified team also offers one to one careers guidance and bespoke workshops with a clear focus on progression and employability. We will develop increasingly individualised guidance to eliminate progression gaps for under-represented groups by 2025. Our Careers Team staff will develop enhanced and relevant disability specialisms to improve the information, advice and guidance on offer. Disabled students and those with an identified need will be guaranteed one to one meetings with a qualified careers advisor to help develop graduate attributes and employability skills and to ensure adequate support when planning meaningful work based learning in an appropriate environment. We will enhance activity to encourage disabled students to apply for DSA and raise awareness of our disability support specialists.

#### 4.5.3. Alumni Activity

With the shift from the DLHE<sup>37</sup> survey to the Graduate Outcomes survey, B&FC have established a working group whose remit includes fostering more effective communications with alumni following graduation. This activity will be designed to increase response rates to the Graduate Outcomes survey and have a positive impact on progression as we provide ongoing support including opportunities for further study and employability.

As part of the research project we plan to fund, we will identify barriers to the ongoing progression of BAME students and will take specific action to engage them as alumni and provide support as they transition into work or post-graduate study.

### 4.6 Overarching theory of change

B&FC will operate effective change management processes in order to shift key areas of focus and to achieve the ambitious targets set out in our Access and Participation Plan (APP). To illustrate B&FC's approach, Appendix A includes a diagrammatic representation of the key areas of focus over the life of the Access and Participation Plan (APP) that we have identified. The theory includes some of the existing frameworks which continue to be successful, such as the Partners for Success framework and the B&FC Career Curriculum, alongside the key development which is a more refined data analytics piece. This diagram will form the basis of dialogue across B&FC and frame our approach over the next five years.

## 5. Student consultation

Student consultation is at the heart of the values of B&FC. B&FC provides an environment where student involvement is embedded and this enables us to co-create conditions likely to generate high quality learning experiences throughout the student lifecycle. Students were consulted as part of the preparation of this Access and Participation Plan (APP) through a dedicated student forum held in May 2019. Students were representative of the whole HE cohort and were drawn from all levels (including foundation degree students, those on full honours degrees and apprentices) across a range of curriculum areas. For optimal input, attendees were also representative of different age groups, genders, POLAR quintiles, modes of study and support needs. The forum provided the opportunity for students to express their views about the content of the plan, to consider the identified target groups and to endorse plans for their future involvement in monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the Students' Union Sabbatical Officer and the HE Student President were asked to consider the proposals in detail.

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<sup>37</sup> DLHE: Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey



Student feedback included the following:

- The plan reflects the needs of the local area and the college community well
- Social media networks could be a useful focus for effective communication of the plan
- The highly successful strategy of engaging Student Support and Wellbeing teams in academic progress reviews should continue so that effective interventions can be targeted at students with the most need and at the appropriate time in curricular delivery
- In order to ensure the APP continues to represent the views of students and that planned activity is shared, an annual APP Student Forum should be established at B&FC

It was also noted that the APP Student Forum was a welcome addition to the range of partnership activities already available to students and that the work of Progress Tutors in signposting available support mechanisms was effective and impactful. The HE Student President and the SU executive team noted that their 'front line ability to gather opinions from students who may struggle with confidence to approach supporting bodies' could provide additional feedback.

From 2020 this annual forum will also incorporate evaluation of the effectiveness of the Access and Participation Plan.

## **6. Evaluation strategy**

### **6.1 The strategic context in which evaluation is undertaken**

At B&FC, evaluation is an integral part of any programme to support widening access and participation. It is used to demonstrate the impact of our interventions and to ensure work is effective. Academic governance is provided principally through the Learning, Teaching and Equality Committee (LTEC), which leads on the awareness, understanding and implementation of local, regional and national strategies and policy drivers in relation to equality and diversity and providing advice and guidance on the strategic development and implications of these across College. Regular reporting on multiple equality measures including age, gender, ethnicity, LLDD, Care Leavers, disadvantage uplift (postcode), POLAR quintiles, qualification types and Disabled Student Allowance are already included on the schedule of business for the committee. LTEC will also receive an annual monitoring report on progress against APP targets. Our newly established APP Steering Group will provide a cross-College focus for discussion, development and implementation of monitoring and evaluation of the APP and will provide LTEC with regular updates against key targets. Examples of activity that the Steering Group will lead upon will include the development of a toolkit of evaluation materials for use across all APP intervention projects, to allow for comparisons on impact and a standardised monitoring template.

Commitment to ongoing research and evaluation is evidenced through the planned allocation of staffing resource. Additionally other staff drawn from relevant areas across College will be provided with training and development to enhance evaluation skills. Expert advice and support will be sourced if required for more complex aspects of work, such as developing research instruments.

B&FC is a learning organisation where reflection, evaluation and review are deeply embedded in both culture and processes. Building on a range of best practice sharing events that currently take place across college (e.g., the annual Progress Tutor Conference; annual curriculum and service areas Self Evaluation Document (SED) best practice events), learning from the evaluation of access and participation interventions will be shared and disseminated for maximum impact.

### **6.2 How evaluation and evidence shape current programme design**

B&FC has worked for many years to identify and refine solutions which support access and participation from under-represented groups. Evidence from previous interventions is used to inform enhanced and new activity on an iterative basis. In addition, contemporary literature and reports from government and other reputable bodies are constantly reviewed and findings are shared via the Academic Management Team and at curriculum team meetings to inform

intervention design and evaluation. B&FC staff engage with a range of networks and conferences to identify best practice and inform continuously improving programme design. The OfS dashboard will support further definition of rationales for interventions and the steering group will support the development of a suite of documentation to enhance this activity. The theory of change approach will be adopted to underpin APP activity, as it is recognised that a range of more focussed interventions may better enable us to meet the differing and complex needs of under-represented groups.

The importance of measuring the impact of positive change activities on those who take part cannot be underestimated in terms of understanding the influence on access and participation of those activities. A range of relevant indicators and measures over short, medium and long timescales are currently used to quantify the results of activities. These include surveys linked to tracking data, focus groups and interviews with results being triangulated to ensure clarity and robustness. Feedback from teaching staff, where relevant, is also obtained. B&FC will seek to further enhance this activity.

### 6.3 Evaluation design

Within B&FC a range of factors are considered to determine which type of evaluation is most appropriate. The APP Steering Group will ensure that a minimum of Type 1 narrative evaluation is implemented for all interventions. For established interventions, basic Type 1 is already in place, with a strong narrative and the theory of change will be used to enhance all evaluation plans during 2020. For several interventions, such as those undertaken through the Student Support and Wellbeing Service, Type 2 empirical research is used and data is already being collected about outcomes and impact. This empirical research enables B&FC to see if those receiving an intervention treatment have better outcomes and to determine whether an activity is worthwhile and should continue. Where necessary and possible, evaluation will be enhanced through the identification of additional points at which data can be collected and, as a minimum, ensuring data collection pre- and post-intervention. A mixed-methods research approach is already adopted for some activity making use of combinations of student interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, meetings and quantitative data analysis. Where possible and appropriate, data is also collected from staff, parents and guardians. Type 3 causality evaluation has not been adopted by B&FC at this point in time, however, opportunities to develop this type of evaluation for certain interventions will be explored over the coming years, with Type 3 causality evaluation being available from 2023-24 onwards.

We will begin to use the OfS self-evaluation toolkit from the end of 2019-20 to evaluate our performance and enable us to adjust activity to ensure maximum return on investment. In order to support the sector-wide drive to evaluate activity and to share best practice, we look forward to contributing to the evidence and impact exchange<sup>38</sup>.

### 6.4 Evaluation implementation

The B&FC APP Steering Group will develop an evaluation plan template and Evaluation Plans will be introduced for all delivered activity as an element of the Access and Participation Plan. These will be reviewed and refined by the steering group and will outline the evaluation activities to be undertaken and those responsible for evaluation, monitoring and dissemination. Each Evaluation Plan will outline the data to be collected and the method of collection. Where possible, individual student level data will be collected, taking due regard of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and other ethical responsibilities. Where new surveys are developed, they are piloted before being rolled out to a wider audience. Senior management support for access and participation and the associated evaluation will ensure that appropriate resources are prioritised for evaluation activity. As a smaller HE provider, having tightly focussed evaluation activities, utilising sampling methods and cost effective approaches, such as online questionnaires, are all areas given consideration to ensure impactful evaluation is achieved from limited resource.

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<sup>38</sup> Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO): <https://www.taso-he.org/>

## 6.5 Making evidence based improvements

Ensuring continuous improvements through an evaluative research and evidence-based approach is the ambition and strategic direction of this plan. The evaluative programme that will underpin the intended delivery of activities will enable a robust evidence base for continuous improvement. Building on previous activity, new pilot activities will be developed from a research-based approach, ensuring targeting is formed from a strong foundation allowing for effective evaluation. Wherever possible evaluation reports are shared and disseminated with partner stakeholders via reports, conference and presentation papers or applications for recognition. Where appropriate, reports will be lodged with the repository being developed by the Evidence and Impact Exchange. Internally evaluation reports will be shared annually with the Learning, Teaching and Equality Committee and HE Academic Board. Evaluation reports will be delivered throughout the lifetime of interventions, to ensure that modifications and enhancements can be made whilst programmes are ongoing, in order to improve them.

## 7. Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

The Corporation Board (The Board), principally through its Quality and Standards Committee, will engage in ongoing monitoring of progress against the APP through regular reports, which will include an overview of key data. The Board will also receive assurances that the APP targets, milestones and evaluation activities are scrutinised through B&FC's HE Academic Board with continuous monitoring and review delivered through the Learning, Teaching and Equality Committee. This committee already interrogates a range of data linked to cohort analysis and ongoing attendance, retention and achievement across a range of different under-represented groups.

Students are engaged in all deliberative committees at B&FC, providing ample opportunity for direct feedback. Such committees include the HE Academic Board (HEAB) and the Learning, Teaching and Equality Committee (LTEC). In addition, the newly established annual APP Student Forum will provide a strategic focus on the APP and will ensure that we capture feedback from all students through the make-up of the forum.

The management of specific areas covered by the APP will also be embedded within normal operational activities through the APP Steering Group and will be reported through the College's management structure, including at Strategic Management Team level. Should progress against the plan not meet expectations, and where critical evaluation and review does not demonstrate sufficient impact, existing processes may be enhanced or changed to address underperformance in a more effective manner.

## 8. Provision of information to students

Clear and transparent information is essential to allow prospective students to make an informed choice. We will give prospective and current students information about the financial support available to them from B&FC and from other national sources.

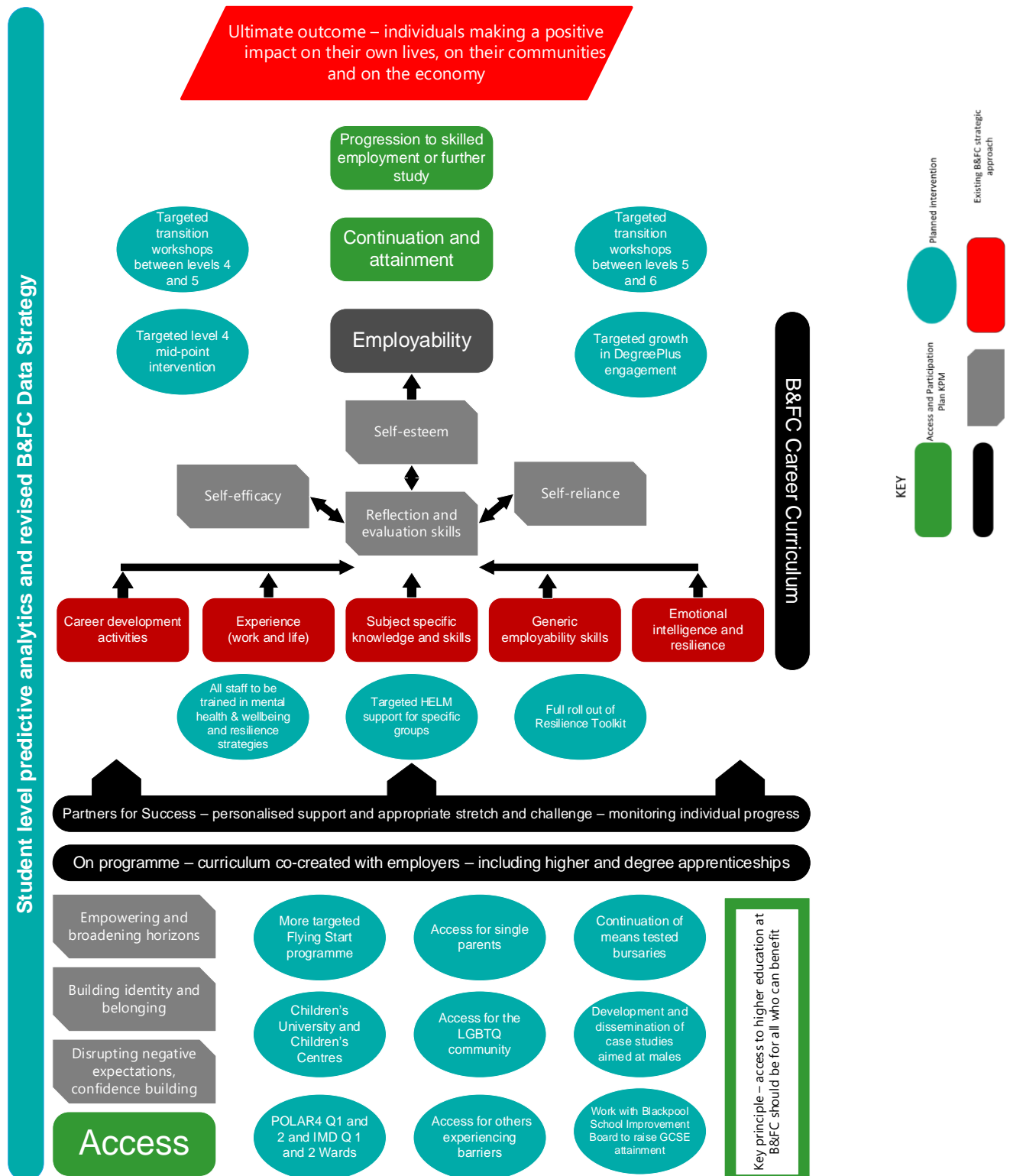
Information will include eligibility criteria, support levels and the method of assessment. This information will be available in our online information for prospective and current students. It will also be made available explicitly to students at the point of any offer of admission. The detailed next steps of the application process are reinforced through regular correspondence with the prospective student and via UCAS. We will develop eligibility criteria for our planned new scholarship and will ensure this is available as part of our drive to improve engagement of under-represented groups.

Financial support is also discussed with prospective students and applicants at open days and enrolment events, during induction and throughout the applications process. This information covers a range of support, including that which forms part of the provisions of the access and participation plan. The information outlines eligibility criteria and signposts any relevant college policies or conditions linked to the support. In addition to published information, Progress Tutors effectively signpost available support, which is explained and made available through our highly qualified and experienced specialist Careers Team and our HE Learning Mentors.

Similarly, detailed information about B&FC's fee levels for the duration of the course(s) is available online to students before they make their decisions. Information confirming fee levels will be sent to students at the point of any offer of admission. Course Tuition Fees are approved by our Corporation Board. Changes to fees included in this plan will be communicated as part of monitoring returns prior to course fees being advertised to students.

B&FC policy, procedures and associated documentation (e.g., application forms) will be updated to include any relevant provisions outlined in the current Access and Participation Plan. This Access and Participation Plan will be available on the B&FC website for public access.

## Appendix A – overarching theory of change



# **Blackpool and The Fylde College Variation to Plan 2023/24**

## **Annexe to Access and Participation Plan 2020-25**

This annexe outlines B&FC's response to the new key priorities for access and participation, as set out by the Office for Students in February 2022. Whilst many parts of our existing plan address these key priorities, B&FC has embraced this opportunity to plan further activity that enhances our commitment to all priorities.

### **Priority A - Make access and participation plans more accessible in a way that prospective and current students, their parents and other stakeholders can easily understand.**

B&FC have produced an accessible summary of our plan, following guidance provided by the OfS.

### **Priority B - Develop, enhance and expand their partnerships with schools and other local and national organisations, to help raise the pre-16 attainment of young people from underrepresented groups across England.**

Following preparation of our 2020-25 Access and Participation Plan, B&FC have continued to develop new and enhance existing relationships with schools and organisations to help raise pre-16 attainment of young people from underrepresented groups. For example, in early 2022, B&FC supported the development of and now works in collaboration with the Blackpool council's newly formed Young People, Employment and Skills Partnership Board, chaired by their Assistant Director, Education, SEND and Early Years, formed to prevent students from becoming Not in Education or Training (NEET) and instead, progress onto meaningful educational pathways to higher education and successful, sustainable careers.

B&FC has also had strategic involvement in the Blackpool Education Improvement Board (formerly Blackpool School Improvement Board) from its inception in 2016. The Board developed Blackpool's 2020-30 Education Vision and Strategy, with the purpose of ensuring that all children in Blackpool receive a positive, inclusive and inspiring educational environment in which they can succeed and achieve. This ten-year educational vision goes hand in hand with the Blackpool Town Prospectus '2030 Agenda for Change' and represents a clear vision of improvement of educational outcomes for children as the underpinning strategy. This is in a context where in 2020/21, 57.5% of students in Blackpool achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and Maths GCSE (teacher assessed), compared to 72.2% nationally. In 2018/19 (the last year of full examinations) 47.8% of students in Blackpool achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and Maths compared to 64.9% nationally.

B&FC also sits on the Blackpool Opportunity Area Partnership Board, which has three key priorities; raising attainment, supporting vulnerable children and improving carer support, all of which align with our access and participation plan priorities. The Blackpool Opportunity Area also provides funding for the Right to Succeed (RTS) initiative, which supports students from unrepresented backgrounds, such as looked after children/children in need. B&FC is a member of the Steering Group facilitating the Pathways for All programme, which is part of the RTS initiative. Recent activity includes training for employability coaches to support students at risk of becoming NEET to transition from schools to further education. The Pathways for All programme has had significant impact evidenced through 70% (of the 144 targeted) of students being in some form of education within six months of leaving school, 15% working with Engagement Coaches to move into training

or employment (EET) and 9% who were not ready for EET being supported in other ways<sup>1</sup>. The proportion of enrolments to B&FC further education programmes, in the last three years, has increased or remained stable from the four schools in the most deprived areas. Together, these represent over a quarter of B&FC's FE enrolments.

Partnership work with local schools has always been a key feature of B&FC's role as an anchor organisation in the community, including 18 secondary schools and sixth form colleges, the Educational Diversity, which is a Pupil Referral Unit and the Home, Hospital Education Service supporting young people from ages 6 to 16. This work was further developed from 2018/19, with a refreshed approach, bringing more children from deprived areas into College, to raise awareness and expectations. Engineering activities, such as the Robo Challenge project led by B&FC and funded through Uni Connect, helped year 9 and 10 pupils realise their potential for higher education and the required educational journey to pursue a career in engineering. A number of the pupils involved in the Robo Challenge project are now studying at level 3 at B&FC, with aspiration to enter higher education.

Since September 2021, a specific programme of liaison and development with headteachers from across local schools, led by B&FC, has provided discussion opportunities for raising attainment with schools and the potential for shared curriculum. This year has also seen the development of a plan to support the delivery of a BTEC IT and Digital level 1/2 award in a local secondary school, with B&FC providing dual professional teaching staff who are also industry experienced to really facilitate the development of key digital skills, raising attainment and creating strong links between school and college.

Moving forward B&FC will further develop, enhance and expand partnerships to raise pre-16 attainment amongst underrepresented students in the following ways. We will:

- Create a collaborative strategy with our network and stakeholders to support the development of pre-16 attainment, to be included within the new access and participation plan 2024/25 to 2027/28.
- Work with the Young People, Employment and Skills Board to create a ten-year education strategy for the area, aligned with the submission of a Connected Futures bid to support targeted groups to be retained in education.
- Collaborate with the Right to Succeed group to pilot transition taster days in 2022 for year 10 pupils.
- Recommence taster days, open days and carousel activities at B&FC and local schools from June 2022, following the pandemic, for years 7-11. These events will prioritise those students identified as at risk of early withdrawal and will raise aspiration and aid transition to further education.
- Undertake targeted outreach activities to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) schools in the area
- Extend participation of the World Skills Centre of Excellence programme to include the Fylde and Wyre area secondary school pupils, in addition to B&FC students. This programme enhances the teaching and learning experience for our students and will raise aspiration for pupils.
- Following the pandemic, we will investigate re-establishing our involvement with the Children's University, alongside Blackpool Council. For many years, B&FC funded and facilitated the Children's University Graduation event following the main B&FC graduation

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<sup>1</sup> <https://righttosucceed.org.uk/working-collectively/pathways-for-all/>

events at the Winter Gardens Blackpool, raising awareness and aspiration for children and their families.

- Continue to use OfS outreach mapping data and actively engage in the Uni Connect partnership, Future U, to enhance Uni Connect relationships, activities and submit bids for collaborative projects that will contribute to aspiration and attainment raising for disadvantaged students in the local area. For example, we are currently working with Future U to support the Green and Digital skills agenda in schools and have just launched an inter school digital competition for two local secondary schools in the region focussing on Year 9 students within the Uni Connect wards.

### **Priority C - Set out how access to higher education for students from underrepresented groups leads to successful participation on high quality courses and good graduate outcomes.**

Access and participation are integral to B&FC's ethos, mission and HE Strategy 2020-2025, which outlines six key strategic themes, one of which is focussed on widening participation. In addition to the activity detailed in our APP, we have enhanced our strategies, delivered a range of impactful interventions and identified further activity to enable access to higher education for students from underrepresented groups, leading to successful participation on high quality courses and good graduate outcomes. Examples include refreshing our holistic Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy and the further development of our internally replicated access and participation dashboard, which has facilitated the monitoring of targets and gaps ahead of the OfS dataset publication and has been crucial in identifying groups of students for relevant interventions to improve participation and outcomes. We have also enhanced our enrolment forms to further capture detail on students from underrepresented categories, for example, single parents and ex-carers, so that we are able to offer them a tailored package of academic, pastoral and financial support.

Activities to support our three access APP targets include continued engagement with Uni Connect activities, presence on local school governing bodies and comprehensive information advice and guidance to support internal progression to higher education and support to enter higher education, for example with non-traditional qualifications. These activities have been impactful and contributed towards all three targets in 2020/21 being met. These are exemplified by an increase in enrolments from the secondary schools whose governing bodies include representation from B&FC, and progression to level 3 from those students who engaged in Uni Connect activities. Activities to support access to higher education for underrepresented groups will continue and be further enhanced, as outlined in Priority D below.

Activities to support good outcomes relate to our continuation, attainment and progression targets (PTS\_1 -6 and PTP\_1). These include ensuring teaching and learning is inclusive and accessible, supporting mental resilience, academic and study skills support from our HE Learning mentors (HELMs), Flying Start transition workshops and financial support.

Fika, a mental fitness skills development platform used in many universities and colleges, has now replaced B&FC's resilience tool due to the enhanced accessibility enabled through its user interface. Fika reports a 15% increase in focus, 14% increase in motivation and a 13% increase in confidence across their customer base<sup>2</sup>. The application was launched at B&FC in 2021/22 and is free to all B&FC students. The prominent themes most visited by B&FC students included confidence, sense of purpose and social interaction. Based on these findings, additional digital

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fika.community/>

resources have been made available to students, alongside hosting a roadshow and inviting the local community partners into College to offer workshops and promote external wellbeing activities in a social prescribing model.

Some B&FC Flying Start transition workshops, into higher education or between levels, specifically target widening participation cohorts and tailored sessions focus on the development of core critical skills and academic practice. Flying Start transition programmes are continually enhanced in response to evaluation and student feedback. The sessions reach approximately 140 students per year, with a subsequent positive retention rate of 90% to their next year of study.

Impact analysis demonstrates that HELMs have a positive effect on continuation and achievement at B&FC, particularly for students in underrepresented groups and groups monitored in our APP targets PTS\_4, PTS\_5 and PTS\_6. In 2020/21, almost 2,500 support sessions with over 500 students took place. A case loading approach for students in underrepresented groups was introduced in 2021/22, which is proving effective and will therefore continue.

In September 2020, B&FC introduced 'Student Life', a student information portal that provides student resources on academic, personal and professional development on a 24/7 basis. Specific sections have been developed to provide tailored support for different groups of students, such as care leavers, working parents and under 25s living independently, to which students are successfully being sign posted.

Our self-paced tutorial package, Power to Progress, was introduced in 2020/21 and is available through our VLE. This supports good graduate outcomes through, for example, content adopted from the QAA Supporting Student Transitions toolkit<sup>3</sup>. In addition, students are invited to submit a short self-reflection on academic performance, resilience and confidence in accessing support, which is utilised to further target individual support during one to one discussions.

Content for both Student Life and Power to Progress is tailored, based on continuous student feedback. As our student demographic typically contains a higher-than-average proportion of white working-class boys in higher education from deprived areas and low participation neighbourhoods, who are known to have lower participation and attainment<sup>4</sup> in HE, this dialogue provides insight on how B&FC can further support students from underrepresented groups to achieve higher grades.

To support meeting our target PTP\_1, B&FC will continue to provide a tailored careers package for students with a declared disability. This package includes the offer of a guaranteed individual session with a careers advisor, plus workshops on next steps after graduation and local labour market information. Since introduction, B&FC's Careers Team have had approximately 300 interactions reaching over 200 students with disabilities and/or learning differences each year.

The financial support evaluation undertaken by B&FC using the OfS toolkit, has demonstrated the positive impact of financial support on continuation, degree completion and attainment. It has also identified that the £200 Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) contribution fee was a barrier to students accessing IT to participate in higher education. Therefore, B&FC introduced a grant to cover that fee in 2021/22, utilising hardship funding. The grant has been awarded to 50 students to date, with student feedback showing it is highly valued by students and removes barriers to accessing equipment recommended by the DSA assessment.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://membershipresources.qaa.ac.uk/s/supporting-successful-student-transitions>

<sup>4</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/203/education-committee/news/156024/forgotten-white-workingclass-pupils-let-down-by-decades-of-neglect-mps-say/>



Recognising the current economic climate impacting the financial capacity of some students to access HE, B&FC has issued additional hardship monies to levels 4, 5 and 6 students who received hardship funding earlier in the year. The additional funding will assist students to progress. For example, it is intended to support travel and clothing for interviews and/or essential equipment required for the next level of study. Through closely monitoring financial support, B&FC will continue to effectively use all of its hardship funds through initiatives such as this.

Our recent investment in laptop lockers within the learning resource centres has enhanced our service to provide easier access to students in digital poverty whilst on campus. The laptop loan facility for higher education students experiencing digital poverty will continue to be reviewed, to ensure it is enabling our students to have the required access to digital technologies.

Our future plans for ensuring higher education students from underrepresented groups lead to the successful participation on high quality courses and good graduate outcomes include:

- Additional variants of Flying Start will be held from summer 2022, such as those returning to education after a long break, those progressing from further education to higher education and students who will be working full time alongside their study. These sessions are open to all students, but targeted invitations will be sent to groups of students known to need additional support.
- Longer careers appointments will be offered to students with learning difficulties/disabilities and will be extended to students from other underrepresented groups to help them map their future careers, evaluate their current situations and develop action plans.
- Predictive learner analytics continue to be piloted at B&FC, for example to automatically caseload students to the HELM team, which will provide early, maintained and monitored interventions that are tailored to specific groups. The existing evidence base suggests that well-designed learning analytics interventions tend to improve students' outcomes<sup>5</sup>.
- Each underrepresented student will be offered a dedicated HELM for support in tracking their progress and targets associated with the HE skills continuum. The use of a higher education, college-wide skills continuum and identification of skills gaps for students from underrepresented groups will support students in mapping their academic progress and aid higher achievement. Resources directly aligning with the skills continuum will be promoted and delivered to groups with high numbers of underrepresented students.
- Power to Progress will be evaluated by both staff and students on an ongoing basis to further enhance the offer.
- Exclusive career topics and employer workshop events will be offered to underrepresented student groups throughout the year. This is in response to qualitative feedback that demonstrated almost half of disabled students felt there would be progression challenges for them. Workshops will focus on the specific difficulties these students face when progressing into highly skilled employment.

**Priority D - Seek to develop more diverse pathways into and through higher education through expansion of flexible Level 4 and 5 courses and degree apprenticeships.**

As outlined in our plan, B&FC has a well-established portfolio of programmes that is flexible to meet the needs of non-traditional students and designed to respond to local, regional and national demands for higher technical professional education. Alongside traditional HE qualifications, B&FC

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<sup>5</sup> <https://taso.org.uk/intervention/learning-analytics-post-entry/>

also provides a suite of higher and degree apprenticeships, together with professional qualifications (for example, the AAT, CIPD and education training).

B&FC regularly review the higher education curriculum to ensure both fitness for purpose of the curriculum and alignment with local, regional and national priorities, allowing a high quality of courses to be maintained. Explicit alignment with the HE Strategy is considered in curriculum design, ensuring alignment with the six themes. Since our plan was written, the provision has been expanded, as outlined below:

- Our access to higher education programmes is being further enhanced and more widely promoted to support progression to HE. For example, since 2017/18, B&FC has offered a level 2 pre-access programme, which has grown from 12 students in 2017/18 to 66 students in 2021/22. In 2021/22, a short level 2 award, 'Preparation for HE' was created to support transition into HE for applicants who have been offered a place on a B&FC HE programme and would benefit from an academic skills refresher. Our suite of Access to HE diplomas continues to expand, for example an Access to HE award for Project Management is in development to support industry professionals to enhance their future careers in higher education.
- A range of Level 4 Certificates of Higher Education target awards have been validated in 2021/22. The certificates are aligned to level 4 of their respective honours degree which means students can, if they choose, apply to study level 5 of the corresponding programme at B&FC or apply to other HE providers.
- A level 4 Diploma in Adult Care is being introduced in 2022 to support the development of staff in a number of job roles in the adult care sector. This will provide a progression route from the associated level 3 diploma.
- In 2021/22, Lancashire providers entered the pre-award stage in their bid to become an Institute of Technology. B&FC is the lead skills provider in the consortium, working with three universities and six colleges, providing geographic coverage across the county. This will increase the number of students with higher technical qualifications, provide the skills that employers need, attract a diverse range of learners to address the lack of diversity in some parts of the technical workforce to maximise their social as well as economic impact and support adult learners who want flexible access to higher-level education. Specific targets supporting engagement of underrepresented groups, with a particular focus on women into STEM and enabling access from areas of high deprivation, will support work to enhance social mobility.
- B&FC will begin delivery of its first digital Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ) in September 2022. These qualifications demonstrate alignment to employer-led occupational standards. B&FC is currently considering submitting further HTQ applications in the current cycle 3, which closes at end July 2022. If successful, these would commence delivery in 2024. HTQs provide a progression route from our existing T-Levels, which will increase internal progression to higher education.
- Higher and degree apprenticeship provision has grown from 680 students in October 2020 to 818 in October 2021. As outlined in our Apprenticeship strategy<sup>6</sup>, B&FC's apprenticeship portfolio has a strategic STEM focus, supporting key sectors in engineering, aerospace and maritime. B&FC carefully reviews the apprenticeship standards that we deliver on a regular basis to ensure that it is aligned to employer and key stakeholder needs. The growth of higher and degree apprenticeships, whilst maintaining standards and assuring quality, remains a primary area of focus within the College.

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.blackpool.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2021-09/bandfc\\_apprenticeship-strategy\\_apprentices-employers-partners.pdf](https://www.blackpool.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2021-09/bandfc_apprenticeship-strategy_apprentices-employers-partners.pdf)

Our future plans for Priority D include:

- Continuing to expand and develop our range of Access to HE programmes, providing further pathways into HE. (In 2022/23 we are streamlining and developing our access to HE provision across our policing, criminal justice, protective services, tourism and sports programmes).
- Continuing to grow our suite of higher and degree apprenticeships
- Further embracing HTQs as more are developed in future cycles
- Exploring the introduction of micro credentials and associated credit transfer
- Continuing to expand certificate of higher education target awards
- Evaluating the impact of all the above developments. We also intend to refresh our HE Strategy to reflect developments in the HE sector, including looking ahead to the introduction of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement, to offer more diverse pathways into and through higher education by means of the expansion of flexible Level 4 and 5 courses and degree apprenticeships.

### **Priority E - Evaluation enhancements**

In addition to the evaluations referred to in our plan, the following evaluation approaches are planned, or have been commenced since our plan was written:

- Invested in professional statistical and research software, to produce robust and reliable evaluations that provide empirical evidence (type two evaluation) and scope for causal evaluation (type three evaluation).
- Appointed an Insight Analyst in September 2020, to strengthen the evaluation practice in both quantitative and qualitative research methods.
- Shared good practice at the Mixed Economy Group of colleges, the annual UK Advising and Tutoring conference, NorthCLASS regional care leaver meetings, the HE Institutional Research network and with other local further education colleges.
- Contributed to an OfS Insight brief, sharing to the sector the approach and effect of our summer school programme, Flying Start.
- Regularly engage in TASO conferences, webinars and the evidence toolkit to strengthen evidenced based knowledge in student outcomes.
- Engaged in a range of internal and external research concerned with access and participation.
- B&FC will produce an access and success document, that will summarise our APP performance against targets in addition to evaluations outcomes. This document will be published on the APP section of the B&FC website and will aid transparency of our research and outcomes, to ensure they are more visible to prospective students, current students and stakeholders.

**Summary of 2020-21 entrant course fees**

\*course type not listed

**Inflationary statement:**

Subject to the maximum fee limits set out in Regulations we intend to increase fees each year using the RPI-X

**Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Enrolled in or after 20/21	£8,335
Foundation degree	Enrolled in 19/20	£8,250
Foundation year/Year 0	Enrolled in or after 20/21	£8,335
HNC/HND	Enrolled in or after 20/21	£8,335
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	Enrolled in 20/21	£8,335
Accelerated degree	Enrolled in or after 20/21	£11,000
Sandwich year		£1,850
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4c - Part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	Enrolled in or after 20/21	£5,557
Foundation degree	Enrolled in or after 20/21	£5,557
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	Enrolled in or after 20/21	£5,557
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2020-21 entrants**

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

# Targets and investment plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Provider name: Blackpool and the Fylde College

Provider UKPRN: 10000754

## Investment summary

The OfS requires providers to report on their planned investment in access, financial support and research and evaluation in their access and participation plan. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in student success and progression in the access and participation plans and therefore investment in these areas is not recorded here.

### Note about the data:

The investment forecasts below in access, financial support and research and evaluation does not represent not the total amount spent by providers in these areas. It is the additional amount that providers have committed following the introduction of variable fees in 2006-07. The OfS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Total access activity investment (£)</b>	£321,447.00	£336,196.00	£340,457.00	£341,723.00	£341,723.00
Access (pre-16)	£128,579.00	£134,478.00	£136,183.00	£136,689.00	£136,689.00
Access (post-16)	£96,434.00	£100,859.00	£102,137.00	£102,517.00	£102,517.00
Access (adults and the community)	£96,434.00	£100,859.00	£102,137.00	£102,517.00	£102,517.00
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
<b>Financial support (£)</b>	£300,000.00	£300,000.00	£300,000.00	£300,000.00	£300,000.00
<b>Research and evaluation (£)</b>	£70,000.00	£70,000.00	£70,000.00	£70,000.00	£70,000.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<b>Higher fee income (£HFI)</b>	£4,352,260.00	£4,730,385.00	£4,839,660.00	£4,872,100.00	£4,872,100.00
<b>Access investment</b>	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
<b>Financial support</b>	2.8%	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
<b>Total investment (as %HFI)</b>	6.5%	6.4%	6.3%	6.3%	6.3%

