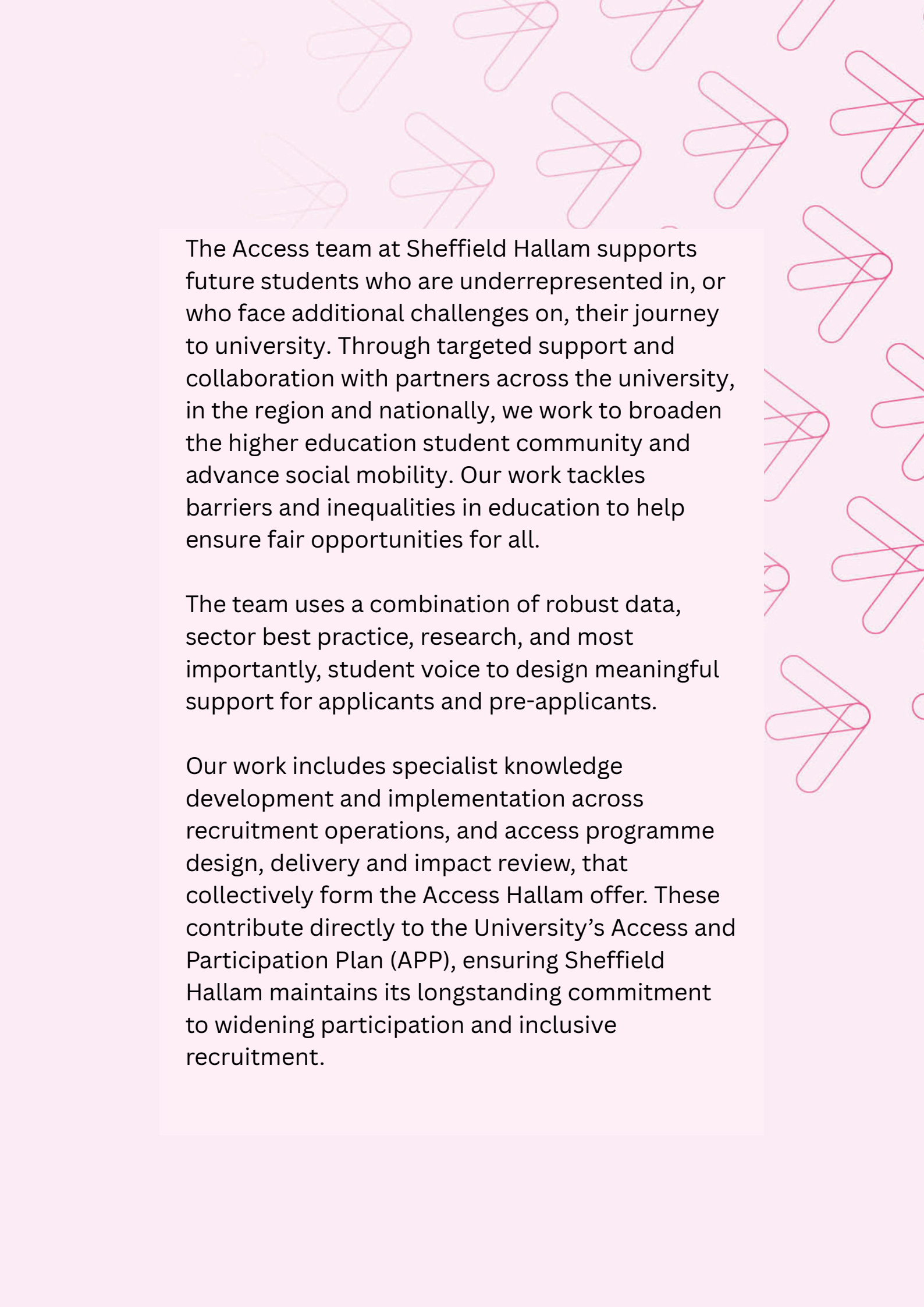


Access team

Impact report
2024/25





The Access team at Sheffield Hallam supports future students who are underrepresented in, or who face additional challenges on, their journey to university. Through targeted support and collaboration with partners across the university, in the region and nationally, we work to broaden the higher education student community and advance social mobility. Our work tackles barriers and inequalities in education to help ensure fair opportunities for all.

The team uses a combination of robust data, sector best practice, research, and most importantly, student voice to design meaningful support for applicants and pre-applicants.

Our work includes specialist knowledge development and implementation across recruitment operations, and access programme design, delivery and impact review, that collectively form the Access Hallam offer. These contribute directly to the University's Access and Participation Plan (APP), ensuring Sheffield Hallam maintains its longstanding commitment to widening participation and inclusive recruitment.

Summary

The team continue to strive to make a difference to underrepresented students by expanding equality of opportunity and improving outcomes. In 2024/25, guided by a Theory of Change, we engaged with over 4000 applicants and pre-applicants including targeted interventions that raise awareness, boost engagement, build confidence, and nurture a sense of belonging. Our approach ensures that students arrive at university feeling welcome, prepared and fully supported.

Programme Highlights

Hallam Progress

Nominations increased by 23%, with marked improvements in applicant confidence and preparedness. Preparedness rose from 59% at the start of the scheme to 88% at the end, and knowledge of support increased from 41% to 94%. 100% of those giving feedback felt positive about starting at Sheffield Hallam.

Black British Pathway Programme

Engagement grew from the previous year. Mentoring significantly enhanced participants' sense of belonging and likelihood of choosing Sheffield Hallam. 67% of participants applied, and 48% of those applicants enrolled at Hallam.

Uni Ready

While participation was lower than the previous year, those that did participate reported increased preparedness for university life, and indicated an increase in positivity and confidence about starting at Hallam.

South Yorkshire Boys' Impact Hub

A new regional partnership launched to improve outcomes for boys and young men on free school meals, with a shared regional Theory of Change and inaugural conference planned for 2025/26.

LGBTQ+ Inclusion Work

We enhanced pre-entry support through improved staff training, increased visibility, and strengthened inclusive practices across applicant-facing interactions.

Learning & reflection

From evaluation, monitoring and tracking, targeted and personalised support appears most effective. Specialist programmes (eg, Hallam Progress, Black British Pathway Programme) yield the strongest outcomes in confidence, belonging, and enrolment, suggesting that students increasingly value tailored support over generalised provision.

The strategy to integrate 'belonging and mattering' into all interventions is clearly justified. Relationship building before enrolment is essential and measurably effective. Students may prefer specialist, identity-based, or needs-based support and interventions that build early connection - with staff, peers, and student ambassadors - have demonstrable impact on student confidence.

Access Hallam

More than 73% of students at Sheffield Hallam indicate at least one widening participation marker upon accessing the university. These are students who are underrepresented in higher education (HE), including, those with care experience, are carers, or are from disadvantaged backgrounds and are less likely to participate in HE.

The Access team ensures that our recruitment reach is as inclusive and broad as possible by reducing barriers, supporting transition and offering targeted programmes of activity. Our offer aims to support the wide breadth of students whilst engaging those in most need with more tailored and intense support.

Impact themes

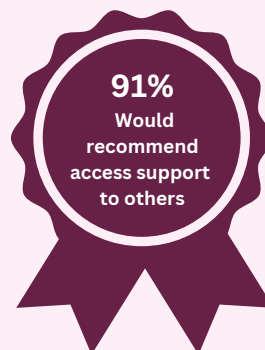
Our research has identified the following 5 priority 'change mechanisms' that we believe create the most impact. These are embedded across our programmes and activities. We plan, deliver and monitor these using a bespoke Theory of Change and evaluation plan model across all projects, ensuring we can demonstrate outcomes and impact, learn what works and continuously improve our service.



- Awareness**
All applicants and students participating in outreach to be aware of access support at Sheffield Hallam.
- Engagement**
Activities should be both engaging and beneficial, ensuring that participants are actively involved in them.
- Influence**
Participants feel that Hallam is the place for them, and our activities increase their confidence to apply, accept and enrol.
- Prepared**
All applicants feel prepared for university life and study. Transition to university is as smooth as possible.
- Belonging & Mattering**
Cultivate a sense of community even before students enrol, ensuring that they feel valued and that they belong here.

"If it wasn't for the support programmes, I don't think that I would have managed university life, they meant I had a more equal stand during my university journey."

Access Hallam participant, 2024/25



Access Hallam evaluation



Hallam Progress evaluation

Our approach

Our work is based on research and evidence of 'what works'. We use the Theory of Change methodology to aid planning, implementing and evaluating initiatives by outlining how activities lead to the desired outcomes and impacts. This method emphasises the pathways and underlying assumptions, offering a framework that helps us understand, design, and communicate the logic behind how change can occur. A simplified logic model of the Access Hallam Theory of Change is below.

Evaluation

Our evaluation is tailored to each intervention, we use mixed methods of evaluation including surveys, case studies, focus groups, with feedback from participants, student ambassadors and staff. We monitor and track participants throughout their access journey and into higher education and use a variety of metrics and indicators to demonstrate the outcomes and impact of our initiatives.

Championing student voice

Student voice is an active part of our work across all Access Hallam programmes, we consistently work alongside students to co-create our activity and interventions, including design and delivery. We seek to champion student voice wherever possible.

Collaborative partnership

We work alongside partners across the university, in the region and nationally to champion access.

Theory of change logic model

Problem statement

There is an underrepresentation of certain groups of students in higher education (HE). These students have additional personal circumstances that can act as a barrier to their attainment and progression to HE. To align with Sheffield Hallam's commitment to supporting access to HE the Access team provide a range of support including activities and resources to facilitate applicants and pre-applicants with their journey to HE.



Programmes & Activities

Hallam Progress

Previously named SHU Progress, Hallam Progress is our applicant and transition support scheme that supports underrepresented groups to access Sheffield Hallam.

Black British Pathway Programme

Initially created to support the APP target to increase access for Black British students to Sheffield Hallam, this programme continues working to foster a sense of belonging and mattering for those students.

Uni Ready

A series of activities to support applicants with a contextual offer to access Sheffield Hallam and be prepared for university life.

South Yorkshire Boys' Impact Hub

Launched in 2025, the hub was convened by the Access team to support the APP target to increase access to Sheffield Hallam for boys and young men on free school meals.

LGBTQ+ Inclusion

Ensuring LGBTQ+ students have a positive experience during the pre-enrolment and application phase, and feel welcome at Sheffield Hallam.

4690

Contextual offers made
(Applications)

4263

Individuals with a
Contextual Offer = eligible
for access support

1299

Individuals with a
contextual offer went
on to enrol - **30% of
contextual offer
applicants**

558

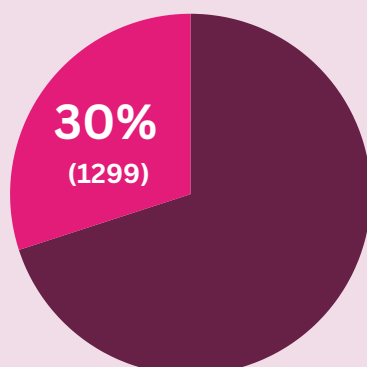
Students eligible for
support engaged with
Access Hallam in their
application year

56%

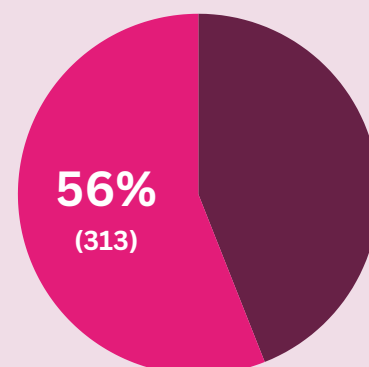
(313) went on
to enrol

Applicants that engaged in access support were 26pp more likely to enrol at Sheffield Hallam than those with a contextual offer (CO) who did not engage in access support.

Applicants with a
CO that went on
to enrol



Applicants with a
CO and engaged in
access support that
went on to enrol



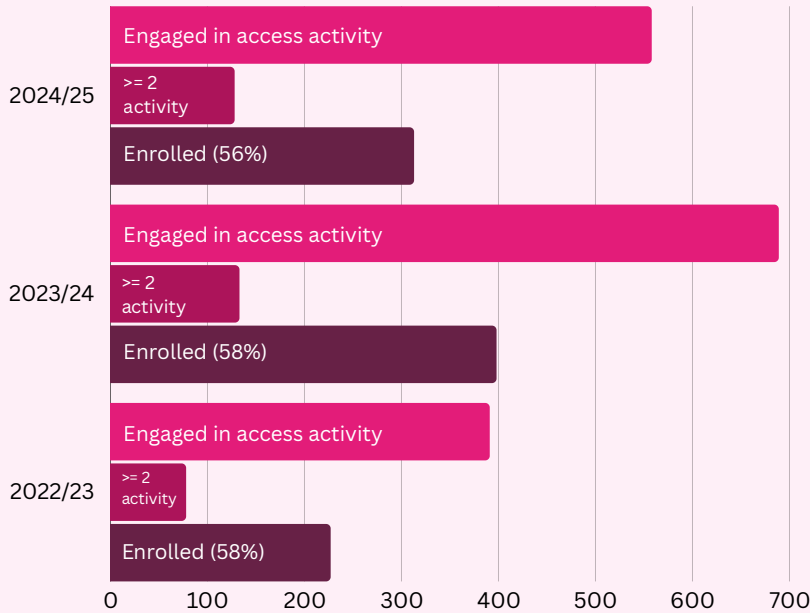
The students that did participate may have been more engaged with Sheffield Hallam in general, and therefore more likely to enrol. However, building a relationship between applicants and the university prior to enrolment, and fostering that sense of belonging is acknowledged as a key contributor to inclusive recruitment success, and brings insight to support multiple areas of work across the pre-entry space.

Access Hallam Evaluation

September 2025 entrants (2024/25 participants)

Evaluation of the programme as a whole takes place after enrolment - a survey is sent to all enrolled students that received a contextual offer from Hallam.

This years survey will be sent to over 1300 current students in December 2025, results available in Spring 2026.



558 engaged in access support in 24/25

23% of participants engaged in 2 or more access activities - 4% more than 23/24

22% have engaged in other outreach activities with Hallam

56% of access participants went on to enrol in September 2025

Enrollment is consistently above 50% across the 3 years

September 2024 entrants (2023/24 participants)

689 students participated in access support activities, 628 in their application year (Year 13 or equivalent).



83% are aware of support at university and **87%** know how to access this support.



57% said that access support had positively influenced their decision to come to Hallam – where they disagreed that the support had influenced them, it was largely because they had already made the decision to come to Hallam.



57% agreed that access support had helped their preparation for university study, and **52%** increased confidence about succeeding at university.



66% feel part of the university community and **79%** feel supported by the university.

91% of access programme participants that enrolled in 2024 have continued into year 2 in 2025.

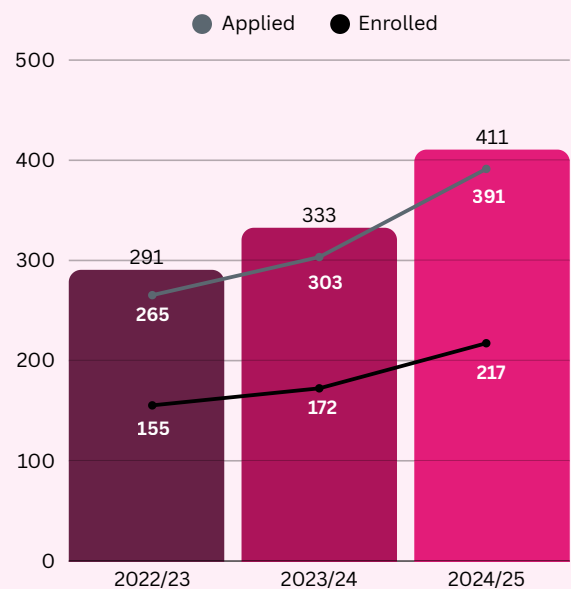
This is slightly above the the national continuation rate for all students, which is 89% (OfS, 2024) and the Sheffield Hallam continuation rate for all students which is also 89% (Sheffield Hallam, Access & Participation Data, 2022/23).

Hallam Progress

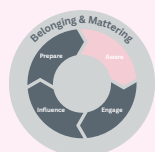
Hallam Progress offers personalised, year-round practical guidance, resources and enhanced transition support for applicants and pre-applicants to Sheffield Hallam.

In 2024/25 there were 411 nominations to the scheme which is a 23% increase on 2023/24, and is 41% higher than 2022/23. Moving forward we aim to encourage nominations to the scheme earlier in the cycle. After careful consideration, to maintain the quality of our support, ensuring capacity is there for those in most need and delivered at the point of most benefit, we may cap numbers in 2025/26. All nominations received after February will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

The largest group we supported this year was disabled students, making up almost a third of all on the scheme. Other significant groups are carers and those estranged from their immediate family. We have done additional work with these groups this year as part of our priority group intervention project.



“
Thank you so much for your guidance through this process. I truly appreciate the time and care you took in making sure I had all the info I needed to be set up for success.
”
Hallam Progress member, 2024/25



Only 41% of scheme members said they knew about support available as a student at Hallam when they joined Hallam Progress. This **rose to 94% at the end of the scheme and is a 20% increase** from the end of cycle survey last year.



One of our key targets for 2024/25 was to increase preparedness for university. At the start of the scheme **59% agreed they felt prepared for university, this increased to 88% at the end of the scheme.**



89% felt supported through the application process an **increase of 3% from last year.** The same percentage, **89%, felt that Sheffield Hallam is the place for them** an increase of 4% from last year.

100% of those that gave feedback felt positive about starting at Sheffield Hallam, an increase of 13% from last year.

“
Hallam Progress has really helped me ease into student life and show me what it's like at SHU.
”
Hallam Progress member, 2024/25

Hallam Progress at open days



We saw increased numbers at the Hallam Progress stand across all open days, including those completing an expression of interest form and attending the support talks that we do alongside student support. A total of 38 prospective students went on to join Hallam Progress after visiting us at the open day.

For the 2025/26 academic year, we plan to have a strong presence at open days under the Access Hallam brand, showcasing the support provided by the team across all programmes of work as well as the focus on Hallam Progress.

Hallam Progress events

There have been three on campus events this year and two online workshops with a total of 47 members attending along with their supporters. The sessions aim to boost applicants confidence to accept their offer and enrol at Hallam by providing advice, guidance and support in a more small-scale, focussed environment.



After the on campus preparation and transition events in March and June, scheme members felt they knew more about support available at Hallam and found the presentations **helpful and informative**.



They enjoyed the informality of the sessions, and found staff and student ambassadors enthusiastic, welcoming and informative. Attendees felt **'more informed'**, **'prepared and positive'** and thought the sessions were **'engaging'** and **'enlightening'**.

This year, we introduced a new initiative: two pre-arrival sessions designed to assist students with the enrollment process and facilitate their transition to university life. This change was implemented in response to comments received in previous years. One participant noted that these sessions had **"boosted their confidence."**

External partner events



The team have represented Hallam Progress at the Team Fostering event, Voluntary Action Sheffield, Sheffield Young Carers, Barnsley Young Carers, Rotherham Virtual School, Rotherham Foster Carers and an Inclusion evening at The Sheffield College. We have also welcomed a number of Hallam Progress members onto campus for individual support.

Priority group intervention



We make contact with all applicants that indicate on their UCAS form that they are care experienced, a carer or estranged from their family. We want to make sure all these applicants are aware of the support available to them at Hallam. This year **we contacted over 900 applicants, 119 of these went on to join Hallam Progress.**



We have seen a **59% increase** of applicants joining the scheme through priority group interventions in 2024/25 compared to previous years.

“

We would like to pass on huge thanks for all the advice received at the open day attended in Sheffield.

Open day attendee, 2024/25

”

Black British Pathway Programme

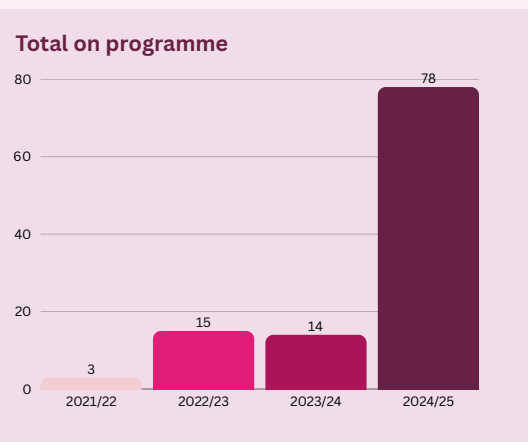
Black British students are identified as a priority group in the Access and Participation Plan. The Black British Pathway Programme creates a pathway for future students to feel welcome at Sheffield Hallam, starting from Year 12 and continuing through their first year of study.

Involving current Hallam students as ambassadors in the co-creation and delivery of activities has strengthened our offer, resulting in increased engagement with the programme, particularly mentoring.

2024/25 was the third full year of the programme following its pilot in 2021/22.



Awards entered for in 2024/25

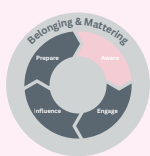


The total number of participants engaged in the programme in 2024/25 was **more than 5 times** the number in 2023/24.

67% of participants in the programme applied to Hallam, and 48% of these applicants went on to enrol.

60% of this years cohort had attended the Year 12 event in 2023/24.

Co-creation workshops with schools & colleges



We visited Thomas Rotherham College and All Saints Catholic High School where their students worked with us and Hallam student ambassadors to help shape future events and social media content.



Discover Hallam Y12 uni taster day

20 Year 12 students joined us from Meadowhead School, Longley Park Sixth Form College and All Saints Catholic High School. Jeffery Manso, a mentor and career coach, launched the day with a motivational talk and some group workshops. Hallam student ambassadors then led a campus and accommodation tour.

Hallam graduate, Samuel Thompson, delivered a cookery session in the university hospitality facilities, then we had a 'Brand & Linked In' workshop led by the Enterprise team and the programme student mentors.



After attending the Y12 uni taster day, more participants considered university an option for them.



We asked participants at the Y12 uni taster day to rate how welcoming they found Sheffield Hallam using a 1-5 scale. The score increased by 15 points after the event.

“

I feel really happy and I think Hallam is a really lively, diverse and comfortable place!

Discover Hallam participant, 2024/25

”

Black British Pathway Programme - Mentoring

The mentoring programme was developed using evidence that suggests contact with current students and future learning environments can help develop a sense of place, belonging and possible self¹. Mentor programmes are shown to improve confidence and progression².

¹ Sanders et al. 2018, ² Malott et al. 2020

Participation in the programme has seen growth this year with 17 mentees, compared to 14 in 2023/24 and 15 in 2022/23. Notably, engagement in sessions has significantly improved, with **100% of participants attending at least one session this year**, up from 50% in 2023/24.

Group mentoring session

Based on feedback, we added a group mentoring session in December 2024. The mentees enjoyed **“interacting with new people”** and one commented that they **“felt heard”**.

	Before mentoring	After mentoring	Change
Intent to study at hallam	5.0	8.5	3.5 points (= 70%)
Feeling welcome at hallam	8.0	9.3	1.3 points (= 16%)

The key aims of this mentoring intervention are to:

- increase participants' sense of belonging and mattering at Hallam.
 - increase their likelihood to progress to enrol at Hallam.
- Our evaluation in 2024/25 shows an increase in both these areas.

Mentoring: Case Studies



Victoria joined the mentoring programme part way through. She planned to study BSc Nursing (Learning Disability) & Social Work at Sheffield Hallam. When asked how welcome she felt at Sheffield Hallam after taking part in the programme, she said **“Absolutely Hallam is welcoming...I feel part of the community already.”**

Prior to joining us, Victoria was feeling anxious about coming to Sheffield regarding her ethnicity, the course content, and placement opportunities. We matched Victoria with mentor, Theo, who shared insights about placements, balancing studies with work, and the support available at Sheffield Hallam. After participating in mentoring, Victoria felt her **worries and concerns had been eased** by seeing role models who had already taken a similar journey to herself.

Victoria, Black British Pathway Programme mentee, 2024/25



We met Emmanuella in early 2024 when we visited Longley Park Sixth Form College to talk to students about the Black British Pathway Programme. Following this Emmanuella attended the Y12 Discover Hallam event in April. **This experience allowed her to explore a variety of opportunities and support available at Hallam, as well as to network with fellow Black British students.**

We continued to strengthen our relationship with Emmanuella through monthly newsletters and she attended our inaugural group mentoring session in December. We paired up Emmanuella with mentor, Tavia, who was already studying a degree in Child Nursing. Emmanuella said that she felt **“much more positive...thanks to the guidance and support provided [by her mentor].”**

Emmanuella, Black British Pathway Programme mentee, 2024/25

Mentors are current Hallam students, trained and paid for their work. They report the positive impact the programme is having on them.

“Being a mentor has also been incredibly rewarding – not only have I built lasting friendships with fellow mentors and mentees, but I’ve gained valuable skills too. From communication and leadership to learning how to support others effectively, the experience has strengthened both my confidence and sense of purpose.” Tavia, Black British Pathway Programme mentor, 2024/25

Uni Ready

Contextual offer holder programme

Launched in 2024/25 this programme provides support and resources for applicants with a contextual offer. In partnership with the Hallam Skills and Student Support teams, this year, 140 students participated in Uni Ready activity, this is a small decrease on previous years activity.

Based on research conducted by the Access, and Student Support teams, these activities have been designed to equip participants for university. They aim to provide students with the necessary tools and knowledge for a successful university experience.



Online modules

After applicants had completed each online module, their scores showed that they felt **23% more confident about managing wellbeing** at university. They felt **17% more confident about settling in** and **11% more confident about managing money**. Applicants found the modules detailed and easy to follow.

Skills Check survey & Academic Skills workshop

Applicants have the opportunity to evaluate their academic skills and identify areas for further development. The survey showed only 7% of respondents expressed complete confidence in their abilities for university study, with 68% being only slightly or not at all confident. Applicants can also attend a workshop.

Participants consistently reported **feeling more confident and better prepared** following the Academic Skills workshop, highlighting the practical guidance on critical writing, referencing and using resources such as the Hallam Library. Overall, students described the session as clear, detailed and extremely helpful –reinforcing its strong impact and the significant boost it provides to learners’ academic readiness. We asked individuals **how positive they felt about starting at Hallam, before and after the workshop, and saw a 15% increase**.

Academic advisor survey

The survey provides students with a chance to connect with academics. The themes raised include **concerns about balancing studies** with personal responsibilities, as well as **managing finances** and **mental health**. Some common goals identified were around **creating a support network, making friends and building confidence**.

Hallam welcome workshops

Student Support Services delivered three online sessions. Based on feedback, **applicants felt positive about starting at Hallam, and felt welcome**. Attendance was down on last year with 50 attendees compared to over 200 in 2024. Further investigation into this decrease in numbers is underway with the team.

“
I found all the information useful to know before I start. I appreciate the timing of the session as I feel on the run up to starting my course I am quite anxious about the unknown so this has helped ease that for me.

Hallam Welcome attendee, 2024/25

Meta-method

A new initiative co-designed with, and delivered by The Elephant Group exploring how being aware of how you think and learn can help improve your own study and outcomes. We had 27 attendees, on average there was a **46% increase after the workshop in positivity and confidence** about coming to, and studying at Hallam.

South Yorkshire Boys' Impact Hub



Disadvantaged white males are identified as a priority group in our Access and Participation Plan. This year the Access team has launched the South Yorkshire Boys' Impact Hub, a part of the National Boys' Impact Movement. This hub aims to improve the educational outcomes for boys and young men who are eligible for free school meals.

Representation in the group includes members from both Sheffield Hallam and the University of Sheffield along with our Uni Connect partner, HeppSY and staff from regional schools, colleges and trusts, Sheffield City Council, and other external providers.

We plan to complete a Theory of Change as a group to ensure we have a clear and shared direction. In 2025/26, we will be hosting the inaugural South Yorkshire Boys' Impact Conference which will bring together professionals from across the region who work with boys and young men in this space. The day will consist of local leaders and industry experts sharing best practice and will hopefully increase knowledge and confidence amongst participants.

LGBTQ+ Inclusion

The project aims to improve provision for LGBTQ+ students during the pre-application and application stage, and to ensure that LGBTQ+ students are supported and championed in every part of the pre-entry journey, with consistency of approach and inclusivity of processes throughout.

To achieve this aim, two discreet strands of work have been identified:

Build knowledge and confidence in staff who work with students pre-entry and during the application process

- Reconvened and refreshed staff task force across the directorate.
- Worked to create a Theory of Change to show our outcomes and impact.
- Updated module for all Student Ambassadors to complete as part of their training.
- Create a new staff training video/module.

Champion student voices and support them directly

- Refocused social media offering.
- Increased visibility through various channels including:
 - sharing pronouns eg at open days, during welcome talks, on email signatures and at school/college visits.
 - LGBTQ+ society mentioned whenever we discuss societies.
 - sharing flag/logo on presentations.

Partnership working

We collaborate with teams across Hallam and external partners in support of a healthy education eco system, that supports social and economic mobility in the region, and a strong future student population at Hallam.

As part of our initiatives, we work closely with university colleagues to ensure that our students receive the support and resources needed for a seamless transition to university life, ensuring they are well-prepared and feel supported.

We have worked with regional schools and colleges to engage their students in our access activity, and have collaborated with charities and organisations including Voluntary Action Sheffield, Sheffield Young Carers, Barnsley Young Carers, Rotherham Virtual School and Rotherham Foster Carers to delivery activity and workshops, provide information and guidance, and to meet potential future students and their supporters.

We engage with our regional partners, including the University of Sheffield, the Higher Education Progression Partnership (HEPP), and our UniConnect Partnership, HeppSY. Together, we aim to understand the unique needs and context of our region. In 2024/25 we set up a Regional Partnership Data, Evaluation and Reporting group to support consistency and sharing of best practice. We are developing a shared monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework across the partnership and will create a partnership-wide Theory of Change to illustrate our collective impact.

Data

Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT)



2024/25 is the 10th year that Sheffield Hallam has used HEAT to monitor outreach participation and track participants in to higher education. We record all our outreach activity on HEAT and collect student level data wherever appropriate. We now have over 60,000 student records on HEAT, and over half of those are eligible for tracking in to higher education, which enables us to further evaluate our activity.

Database profile - helping us target & monitor our impact

We are able to use HEAT data to give us a profile of the outreach participants Hallam is working with. In 2024/25 there was a significant increase in the number of participants across all outreach activity who indicated one or more widening participation marker .

The biggest increases were young carers with 52% more than the previous year and care experienced students with an increase of 35%.

We have seen over 70% more Black British students in 2024/25 than in 2023/24

Students on free school meals has also increased by 15% with almost 10,000 of our HEAT recorded students indicating they are, or have been on free school meals.

Access Hallam

For further information including source data contact

access@shu.ac.uk

shu.ac.uk/access-hallam

**Sheffield
Hallam
University**