

**Final Report: Travel Fund for Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN) Summer School and the Murray Edwards College Open Day Tailored Programmes of Activities**

**INT Widening Participation & Induction Fund (WPIF)**

January 2025

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**1. Summary**

We are grateful to the Isaac Newton Trust for their support of this project, enabling Murray Edwards College to significantly expand travel support for participants in the August 2024 Low Participation Neighbourhood summer school, as well as those groups that wished to attend the Murray Edwards College Open Day Tailored Programmes of Activities in July 2024.

For the July 2024 Open Days, a tailored programme was prepared and communicated to schools in our link areas of Manchester, Haringey and Derbyshire – offering small group tours of the College facilities and accommodation, meeting subject Directors of Studies, the Senior Tutor and President, and time with student ambassadors from their home regions. School groups, individual students and small family groups visited from all three regions, drawing on the funding available for travel and/or overnight support with their travel – as well as guidance on visiting Cambridge from our friendly team. In total, 67 participants were supported by the project and able to attend the activity with financial support.

The Low Participation Neighbourhood summer school for Year 12 students has been delivered as part of a long-running collaborative programme in partnership with Sidney Sussex and Christ's Colleges. With the other two Colleges engaging the cohort of participants in Year 11, offering them the follow-up opportunity in Year 12 to visit Cambridge and engage with academics and current students in person is hugely impactful – as is the time they spend with admissions experts ahead of the October application deadline. The project enabled 32 participants to attend with financial support.

Both activities were all-gender. For the Open Day Tailored Programmes of Activities, 35 women, 29 men, and 3 non-binary students were supported by the project. For the Low Participation Neighbourhood summer school, 19 women and 13 men were supported by the project. Overall, the project supported 99 students: 54 women, 42 men and 3 non-binary students, enabling them to visit Cambridge for in-person participation in outreach activities.

## 2. Delivery report

### a. Murray Edwards College Open Day Tailored Programmes of Activities

With the ambition of bringing groups of students to the Cambridge Open Days that may otherwise not attend, Murray Edwards College scheduled a programme of activities nestled within the wider 4-5 July 2024 Open Days, targeted primarily for Link Area students.

Between 10am and 4pm on each day, prebooked teacher-led groups, individuals and families participated in either the scheduled morning or afternoon sessions. Spaces were reserved in the College car park, enabling three minibuses and four family cars to bring participants and their supporters to the event on each day. The College team supported other attendees in making travel arrangements via public transport, booking train tickets in advance, etc. A particularly well-received aspect of the programme was the College's ability to host vehicles for the whole day, not just their time at Murray Edwards College, as well as providing guidance on visiting other colleges and departments across Cambridge, in order to get the most out of their visit.

Each half-day session at Murray Edwards College included a dedicated small group discussion and Q&A with the admissions team, guided tours of the College, a student ambassador Q&A opportunity, a meeting with the College's President or Senior Tutor, and pre-planned meetings with individual Directors of Studies to explore specific subjects in more detail. Refreshments were provided throughout each session, and outreach staff and Fellows engaged with teachers, parents and supporters while participants were busy, ensuring that they also received advice and guidance on Cambridge admissions.

The General Election on 4 July disrupted some participants' plans, with a small number of families from Manchester cancelling at short notice as they were unable to travel around voting. One school group from Manchester was also unable to attend as planned. 5 July was slightly busier than originally planned, however, as others were able to change plans and visit on the Friday instead.

In total, over 100 visitors attended the tailored programme of activities from Manchester, Derbyshire and Haringey over the course of the two days. 67 of those were supported by the project with travel, of which 28 also received overnight accommodation and breakfast due to the length of their journeys. All 67 were from state-maintained schools, with 64 of those having received Free School Meals and/or currently receiving financial bursaries while at sixth form. 25 of those supported by the project resided in a postcode area flagged as IMD and/or POLAR4 Q1-2.

Participants supported by the project came from the following schools:

- Allestree Woodlands School, Derbyshire
- Derby Moor Spencer Academy, Derbyshire
- Didsbury High School, Manchester
- Dronfield Henry Fanshaw School, Derbyshire
- Fortismere School, Haringey
- Friesland School, Derbyshire
- Haringey Sixth Form College, Haringey
- Landau Forte School, Derbyshire
- Littleover School, Derbyshire
- Loreto College, Manchester
- St Benedict's CVA, Derbyshire
- Swanwick Hall, Derbyshire
- Tupton Hall School, Derbyshire
- Xaverian College, Manchester

Of the 67 participants that were supported by the project, 18 (27%) went on to apply to the University of Cambridge for 2025 entry.

## **b. Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN) Summer School**

The LPN summer school took place at Murray Edwards College across 28-29 August 2024. Attended by 73 Year 12 students, 32 participants were supported by the project with their travel costs. As was a requirement for entry onto the programme in Year 11 (and confirmed again for updated eligibility in Year 12), 100% of participants (including those supported by the project) came from state-maintained schools and lived in low participation neighbourhoods – i.e. postcode areas flagged as IMD and/or POLAR4 Q1-2.

A cohort of nearly 200 students started the LPN programme a year earlier. The 73 attendees of the Year 12 summer school, therefore, represented those with the highest level of commitment to the initiative, participating through to the end of the programme. Naturally, this meant there were a proportionately high number of prospective applicants for the University of Cambridge present,

Over the course of an intensive 2-day, 1-night residential, participants engaged in a range of subject taster sessions with Fellows of the College, discussions and debates with student ambassadors, and admissions workshops focussed on personal statements, super-curricular activity and interview preparation.

A large team of student ambassadors were on hand across both days of the residential, providing tailored, small group guidance for the full range of AHSS and STEM subjects that participants had expressed interest in applying to study at Cambridge.

Participants supported by the project came from

- All Saints Catholic High School
- Ashton Sixth Form College
- Boston High School
- Bournemouth School for Girls
- Brampton Manor Academy
- Carmel College, Merseyside
- Dover Grammar School for Girls
- Harris Academy Greenwich
- Laurus Ryecroft Sixth Form
- London Academy of Excellence
- Loreto Sixth Form College
- Lymm High School
- Methodist College Belfast
- Newcastle Sixth Form College
- Newham Collegiate Sixth Form
- Northgate Sixth Form
- Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Alford
- Rochdale Sixth Form College
- Southend High School
- Spalding High School
- St Davids Catholic Sixth Form College
- St Edwards College, Derby
- St Thomas More, Nuneaton
- The Liverpool Bluecoat School
- Tonyrefail Community School
- Uxbridge High School
- Walbottle Academy
- Wirral Grammar School for Girls
- Yeovil College

Of the 32 participants that were supported by the project, 16 (50%) went on to apply to the University of Cambridge for 2025 entry.

## **3. How others may learn from the project**

Planning for participant travel support on access initiatives is always challenging. By their very nature, effective engagement with underrepresented groups makes it likely that participants will not only require financial assistance, but also that their journeys to Cambridge will be longer, more logistically complex, and more expensive, than for those groups living in more affluent areas with traditionally higher representation at the University of Cambridge.

This project filled a vital gap in the travel support provision that the College had already put in place – but due to higher-than-expected demand was otherwise unsupported. There was, of course, no guarantee that the funding already allocated by the College would be fully disbursed, but with institutional budgets in higher education tightening, and travel costs rising sharply, it is increasingly difficult to accurately predict the need on an annual basis.

Even with this additional support from the Isaac Newton Trust, the project did not fully meet the final requirements for support, with the College meeting the additional overspend. The College will monitor future requests for support with participant travel closely, in order to gauge whether the significant jump in demand this year marks the start of a trend.

Engagement with participants and their families for administration of the support – both in terms of planning and booking travel in advance, and also arranging reimbursement for those that chose to drive or purchase their own tickets – was time-intensive, as expected. Ensuring that sufficient capacity was in place in the outreach team was vital for ensuring that this was a smooth process. In the same way that overall demand cannot be 100% accurately predicted, so it is for how much support each individual participant will need in order to support their participation. For those travelling the longest of distances, with the greatest likelihood of disruption on their journey, this support also extended to assisting participants over the phone with updated information and alternative arrangements on the day, where they were lacking the confidence and experience making such journeys alone.

Considering the activities that this project supported, particularly the Open Day Tailored Programmes of Activities, the outcome of the project demonstrates only too well the literal access challenges facing young people from underrepresented areas of the country. Despite the level of interest in participation from schools in the College's link areas being very high, the need for support from schools and individual families was the deciding factor in their attendance in the majority of cases (i.e. c. 2/3 of all attendees in the Open Day Tailored Programmes of Activities were supported by the project).

As the significant conversion rate of LPN participants supported by the project demonstrates, an in-person residential experience is still valued highly by potential applicants. While online engagement is effective, participant feedback from the summer school emphasised the higher level of impact across all targets as an in-person engagement – confidence and intent to apply, knowledge and understanding of the admissions process, as well as the value of subject-specific insights that enrich super curricular exploration. While online access programmes continue to offer increased reach at lower cost, they are still unable to replace the impact and individual value of a first-hand experience staying in a Cambridge college.

#### 4. Finances

##### a. Murray Edwards College Open Day Tailored Programmes of Activities

Project element	Projected budget breakdown:	Projected cost	Actual spend	Notes
Participant travel	x40 @ ~£40	£1,600	£2,485.62	67 participants – with significant overspend due to increased take up
Bed and Breakfast in College	x30 @ ~£70	£2,100	£1,960	28 participants
Contribution to part-time Temporary Administrator salary	June – August, 13 weeks @ 0.1 FTE. RLW + oncosts. (50% of the total)*	£840	840	As projected
<b>Total</b>		<b>£4,540</b>	<b>£5,285.62</b>	<i>Overspend of £745.62**</i>

##### b. Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN) Summer School

Project element	Projected budget breakdown:	Projected cost	Actual spend	Notes
Participant travel	x30 @ ~£80	£2,400	£2,432.96	32 participants supported. Slight overspend.
Contribution to part-time Temporary Administrator salary	June – August, 13 weeks @ 0.1 FTE. RLW + oncosts. (50% of the total)*	£840	£840	As projected.
<b>Total</b>		<b>£3,240</b>	<b>£3,272.96</b>	<i>Overspend of £32.96**</i>

\*The total administrative support (0.2FTE) time and cost in the bid has been split across the two projects

\*\*The overspend on this project totalled £778.58 – which was met by the College.

**Appendix 1: Applications to Cambridge for 2025 entry from tracked participants, by activity**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Supported Participants</b>	<b>Applications by subject</b>
a. Murray Edwards College Open Day Tailored Programmes of Activities	67	<b>18:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Archaeology (x1)</li> <li>- Computer Science (x4)</li> <li>- Economics (x1)</li> <li>- Geography (x2)</li> <li>- Law (x2)</li> <li>- Mathematics (x4)</li> <li>- Medicine (x1)</li> <li>- Music (x1)</li> <li>- Natural Sciences (x1)</li> <li>- Veterinary Medicine (x1)</li> </ul>
b. Low Participation Neighbourhood (LPN) Summer School	32	<b>16:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economics (x2)</li> <li>- Engineering (x1)</li> <li>- English (x2)</li> <li>- History (x1)</li> <li>- History and Modern Languages (x1)</li> <li>- History and Politics (x1)</li> <li>- Human, Social, and Political Sciences (x1)</li> <li>- Law (x3)</li> <li>- Mathematics (x1)</li> <li>- Medicine (x1)</li> <li>- Natural Sciences (2)</li> </ul>