

**Supporting under-**

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undergraduate degree compared to someone whose highest qualifications are A-levels or equivalent.<sup>1</sup>

Research by the IFS has also found the graduate “earnings premium” associated with attending a Russell Group university is maintained when student characteristics including socio-economic



accommodation. As a result, the number of 'care experienced' students at Nottingham has greatly increased and 'care experienced' students at the University are more likely to continue their studies than the average UK student.

Queen's University Belfast uses sport to foster early engagement with male pupils, primarily from white working-class backgrounds, in years 8 to 10. The University has so far worked with a total of 110 young males from non-selective secondary schools across Northern Ireland and participants are identified based on a range of factors including having a low household income, care experience or a disability, and/or parents who have not attended university.

**Our universities work hard to make sure a combination of academic, pastoral and financial support helps disadvantaged students to flourish once at university.** We recognise that students from disadvantaged backgrounds can face particular challenges and pressures through their transition from school to university and in progressing to employment and further study. Russell Group universities provide additional support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds while at university, through mentoring and support for employability or further study as well as providing bursaries. Initial research has shown that students who hold bursaries are less likely to drop out and more likely to achieve a good degree than those without a bursary.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Support for disadvantaged students on-campus:**

Five Russell Group universities<sup>7</sup> have partnered with upReach, an organisation which improves access to professional employment for undergraduates from less-privileged backgrounds. Participants are offered application support, employability workshops and employer events to help build their knowledge, soft skills, networks and work experience. Participating undergraduates have been five times more likely to secure a job with a partner employer than an average applicant and have secured starting salaries £3,500 more than the average graduate.

The Plus Programme at the University of Leeds provides students from under-represented backgrounds with transitional and ongoing support once they enter the University to boost retention, student success and graduate outcomes. In 2017/18, the Plus Programme supported 3,000 students across all levels of their degrees. Plus Programme participants are less likely to drop out and more likely to achieve a first-class or 2:1 degree than other students from deprived backgrounds at the University.

#### **4. How can regulation and national strategy support these efforts?**

The Office for Students (OfS) in England regulates universities' access and participation efforts and has a key role to play in supporting