

# Aimhigher West Midlands

UniFest 2023



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Aimhigher West Midlands (AHWM) is a partnership of five of the region's universities: Aston University, Birmingham City University, University College Birmingham, University of Birmingham and the University of Worcester. AHWM has been funded by these 5 university partners since 2011, when the national Aimhigher programme was disbanded.

UniFest is a set of summer schools, run for Year 10 learners across 6 universities in the West Midlands (those in the AHWM partnership plus Newman University). Our partner universities run a range of on-campus events, giving learners an opportunity to explore what university life is like, talk to university students and staff and receive careers advice and guidance.

Summer schools have been shown to be effective in developing confidence, motivation, and resilience<sup>1</sup>, and might be associated with progression to HE<sup>2-3</sup>.

In 2022/23 we received over **500 applications** from **79 schools** across the West Midlands.

Learners applied for a place at one of six UniFest 2023 events:

- Aston University – STEM
- Birmingham City University – School of the Built Environment
- Newman University – Creative Change
- University College Birmingham – Vocational University Pathways
- University of Birmingham – Your Future, Your Choice
- University of Worcester – The Mind of a Criminal

**224** learners attended UniFest 2023, 99% of which met at least one of the widening participation criteria in the table below.

CRITERIA	PROPORTION
Postcode indicates low rates of participation in HE (POLAR4 Q1 & Q2)	<b>67%</b> (150 learners) POLAR4 Q1 = 104 POLAR4 Q2 = 46
Eligible for free school meals / FSM6 / Pupil Premium	<b>56%</b> (124 learners)

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/fourth-independent-review-of-impact-evaluation-evidence-submitted-by-uni-connect-partnerships/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e07518>

<sup>3</sup> <https://s33320.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/relationship-outreach-attainment-progression.pdf>

Experience under local authority care as a looked after child	<b>7%</b> (15 learners)
No parental / guardian experience of HE	<b>76%</b> (170 learners)
Disability and/or learning difficulties	<b>22%</b> (48 learners)
Young Carer	<b>10%</b> (23 learners)

### Evaluation:

	Evaluation	Number	%
Number of learners that attended <b>224</b>	Pre-event	<b>173</b>	<b>77%</b>
	Post-event	<b>167</b>	<b>75%</b>
	Both	<b>162</b>	<b>72%</b>

When comparing responses from learners who filled both a pre and post-event questionnaire we found a:

**20%** increase in learners who plan to go to university/higher education

We also saw increases in the number of learners that:

- **86%** understand what courses are available at universities.
- **93%** understand the different routes into higher education
- **216%** understand how to apply to higher education.
- **161%** know what life would be like at a university.
- **80%** increase in learners that understand the costs associated with HE study.
- **205%** increase in learners that understand the financial support available to study in HE.

### Feedback:

**95%** of learners were **satisfied** or **very satisfied** with the event.

Learners said:

- *“The student ambassadors made me feel really comfortable and at home. I also learnt about subjects I've never heard of.”*
- *“I don't want it to end. Great hospitality, accompanied with an understanding and caring and compassionate ambassador.”*
- *“It was very fun and made uni seem less scary.”*
- *“I know much more about uni and had a lot of questions answered.”*