



Annual Monitoring Report 2018 / 2019

www.nya.org.uk
[@NatYouthAgency](https://twitter.com/NatYouthAgency)
nya@nya.org.uk
0116 242 7350

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1.0 Introduction

This report highlights the main findings given in response to the National Youth Agency (NYA) Annual Monitoring pro forma' survey which Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are required to complete as a part of their validation process.

The report supports the NYA, and the wider Youth Work sector, in maintaining a clear picture of the professional Youth Work Training landscape in England. This data will be used by the NYA in its ongoing work around youth workforce development, and will support HEIs in the development of their own Youth Work courses.

Pro-formas were disseminated to **27 HEIs** offering **35 programmes**. The data was received from **33 programmes**, a 94% response rate (affected due to Covid-19).

Without context, the data shows a continuing trend of fewer courses being delivered across fewer HEIs. However, 4 new programmes are due to start from next year, and discussions are under way for further validation of others.

This positive news also reflects the provision of validated training at other levels, with the Government having funded 450 bursaries for delivery of Level 2 and Level 3 validated training across the country last year, as well as increasing amounts of topic-specific training being delivered by experts including through UK Youth's Collectives, the NYA Academy and others. We are hopeful that there will continue to be investment into further bursaries or subsidies.

There have also been other works to strengthen the training offer available, with NYA having convened experts to work on a Curriculum for Youth Work, and continuing to push for apprenticeships at both Levels 3 and Level 6. Government have provided financial support towards these, and also towards undertaking preparatory work to inform a workforce development strategy, a review of qualifications, and more. Youth work is thus receiving more attention in policy discussions: 2019 saw the publication of a national inquiry into youth services via the APPG for Youth Affairs and the General Election of that year saw youth services allocated space and dedicated budgets in each of the major parties' Manifestos. The Conservative Party received a majority and had committed £500m towards youth services over 5 years.

Overall, there is increasing recognition of the need for professional youth workers, and this context provides a positive setting for future years, even as a response to Covid-19 is being developed.

2.0 Executive Summary

1. There is a decline in number of HEIs, programmes and students for this year, with record lows for each. However, 4 new courses are due to have intakes starting in 2020, and discussions are underway with others. There has also been government investment in youth work training and workforce development this past year.
2. Staffing levels have remained stable relative to student numbers, and students retain good access to JNC qualified staff and supervisors, with HEIs providing long-arm JNC qualified support to students in placements where necessary, and also training and guidance to non-JNC supervisors. This has benefitted students who are able to undertake a wide variety of placements in non-traditional youth work settings.
3. Student intakes are ethnically diverse, have a range of starting ages, and programmes are accessible to many disabled students. There is also a clear indication that the 'life experiences' of students are varied with many performing caring, parental or other responsibilities alongside their

studies. Whilst this inclusivity and diversity is positive, much needs to be done to attract more males to the qualifications, with only 1 in 4 of the intake being male for the past 4 years.

4. There is continued improvement to completion rates amongst students at Level 4, which reflects that the learning of previous years has been implemented by HEIs successfully. This is despite the challenges that many students face with other responsibilities and the need for fieldwork requirements to be met.

5. The benefits of a youth work degree are increasingly shown in the fact that of the available student destination data, the roles that graduates are moving into are increasingly diverse, but also that unemployment rates are extremely low.

3.0 Recommendations

- **Acknowledgement of the progress HEIs have made in providing more tailored, personalised support to students with complex circumstances - including mental health needs, caring and parental responsibilities and employment.**

NYA, as the recognised PSRB for youth work in England should seek to understand the actions that are leading to these successes to develop a best practice guide for HEIs who would benefit from this (including for new programmes), and to incorporate these findings into future validations.

- **To attract more prospective graduates The NYA should look towards:**

1. Raising the profile and understanding of the profession.

Now is an opportune moment to build on the raised profile of youth work in recent public and political discourse to promote youth work as a profession. Youth work is gaining traction across a diverse range of institutions; from being labelled as 'transformational' in the Civil Society Strategy, to being considered integral in the APPG for Knife Crime and the Youth Violence Commission, and gaining a foothold in media coverage of Covid-19.

These all provide opportunities to help develop a narrative that promotes youth work.

2. Raising the profile of professional qualifications in youth work'.

For example, the UCAS website states under the information for a youth work degree:

- **Where could I be working?**
You may be working indoors or outdoors, depending on the activity you are organising. You could be based at a local youth club, community centre or religious centre (such as a church, temple or mosque).

Whilst true, this is limited in scope. There is enough evidence to suggest that a JNC degree can lead to a breadth of possibilities for graduates outside of traditional youth work.

The NYA should seek to influence career advisors and educators in 6th form and F.E. to better reflect this when promoting youth work. The destination data also suggests that graduates gain employment quickly in various related fields, especially in education settings.

- Institutions may wish to explore the feasibility of blending traditional and digital delivery (including a proportion of digital delivery of required practice hours), and especially whether this may help improve attendance rates, and more importantly reduce the number of student withdrawals due to 'work-life balance' issues.

Struggles with 'work-life balance' and 'caring commitments' are given as the primary reason for 4 in 10 student withdrawals. A blended approach of digital and traditional learning may provide more flexibility for students who are experiencing such difficulties including by:

- Allowing a greater proportion of work to be undertaken at times that suit students, which would also help ensure students don't fall behind to too large a degree.
- Helping ensure students with time pressure can prioritise practice requirements (although there may be a case for part of these hours to include digital delivery also).

An initial suggestion would be to undertake a review of the experience of institutions delivering distance learning in the youth work sector, and with distance learning students in the first instance, including consultation with students on the benefits of this approach.

- Explore opportunities for providing JNC-supervisor support to HEIs through regional youth work units or other infrastructural bodies to enable students to undertake placements across different settings, including where JNC qualified supervisors are not available.

Where this is problematic HEIs are providing solutions including:

- Training or supporting non-JNC supervisors
- Providing long-arm support from their own JNC staff
- Using existing networks to provide JNC placements

Responses suggest that this 'blended' approach has complemented the specialisms and expertise of staff across a number of disciplines, providing a more comprehensive offer for the student and widening employment opportunities.

Extending this may also help reduce the numbers of withdrawals by enabling students with time pressures to complete supervised practice during hours where they may be more likely to be free (for example during school hours for students with parental responsibilities).

- HEIs have consistently over the past few years commented on two areas which would strengthen a student's chance of progression:
 - Stronger academic ability
 - Greater experience in volunteering

Volunteering:

Many students already arrange their own placements prior to the course commencing, and if they are able should be encouraged to also arrange volunteering opportunities prior to

commencing studies. A strengthening of the network through regional youth work bodies and other infrastructural organisations as per the above recommendation can aid in this.

Academia:

Whilst it is likely not possible to ensure greater academic support for students who may struggle, ETS should consider a research review around particular issues more prevalent for youth work students, and work with HEIs to develop a log of good practice examples mitigating these.

For example, a solid theoretical grounding is essential to what is a professional qualification and this should not be 'dumbed down'. However, it may be that some students are able to better learn and grasp this theory via observing practical examples of the theory in action, and that this could be incorporated into future delivery of programmes.

4.0 Methodology

The following quantitative and qualitative information is currently collected;

- Data on admission, progression and completion and the demographic profile of student numbers;
- Data on staffing levels, placements and supervisors;
- Confirmation of quality assurance within the programme with main strengths and development areas highlighted.

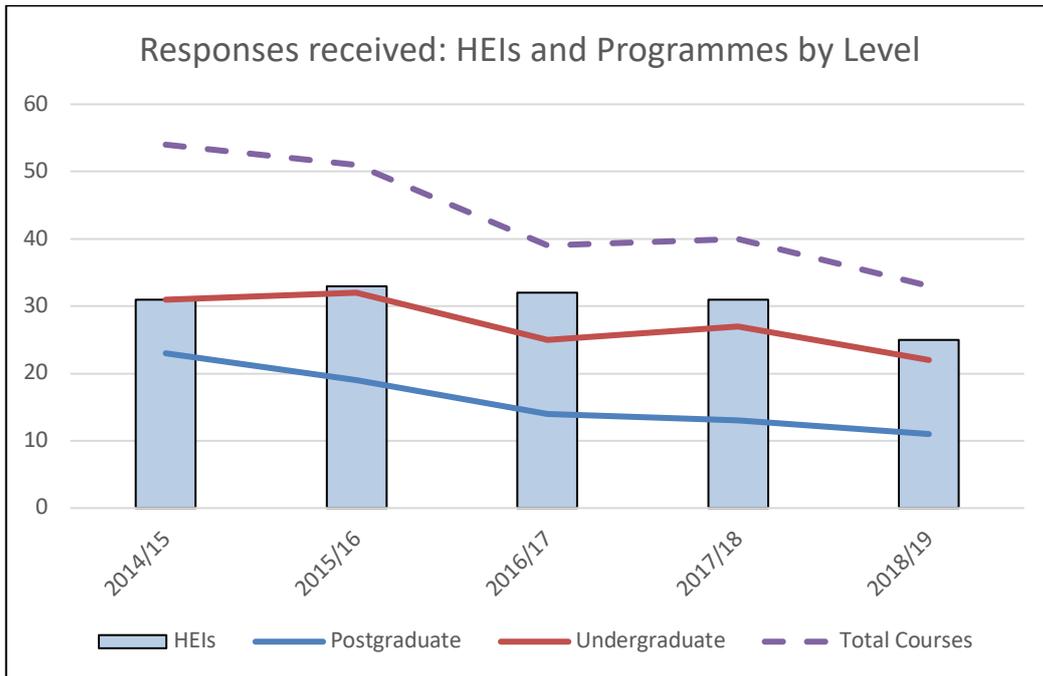
The collection of quantitative data has some minor inconsistencies: for example, some courses receive both January and September intakes with course lengths also differing between distance learning and traditional 'in-house' courses as well across part-time and full-time courses. Some courses also record certain data as a 'percentage' rather than as an 'aggregate'. Some students undertake resits, which can further skew data.

Where these inconsistencies are known and affect the data they are indicated in the relevant places throughout the remainder of this report, but they do not alter the findings significantly.

The data collection method and analysis had also altered last year to provide better reporting on trends. This means that from next year onwards the reporting will take a slightly different shape as those trends emerge. However, some of these data are reported below for the first time.

5.0 Analysis of Data:

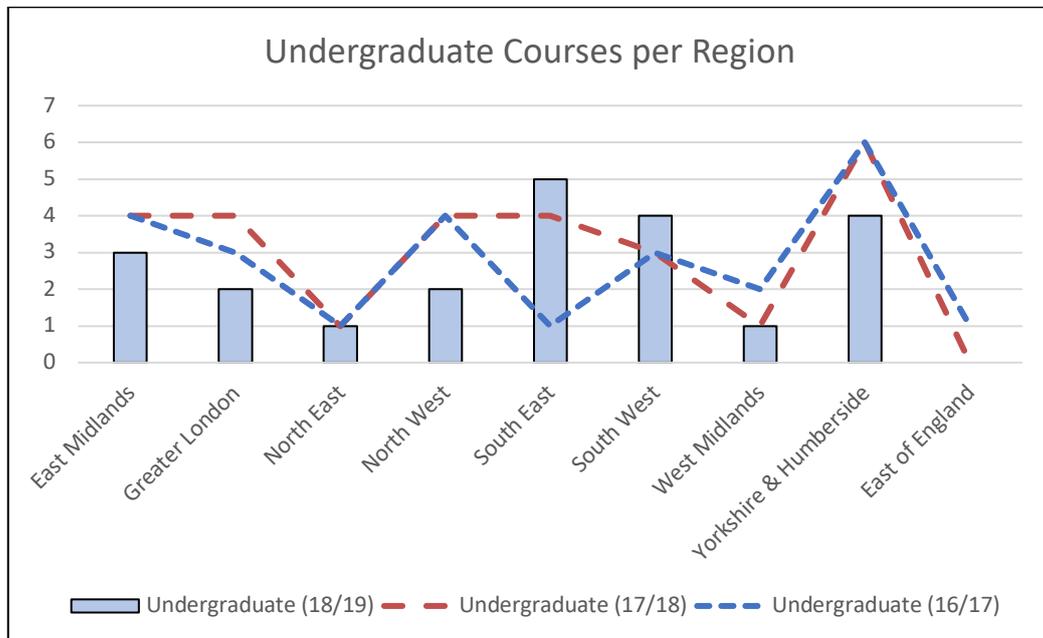
5.1 HEIs and Programmes - High level overview of programmes:



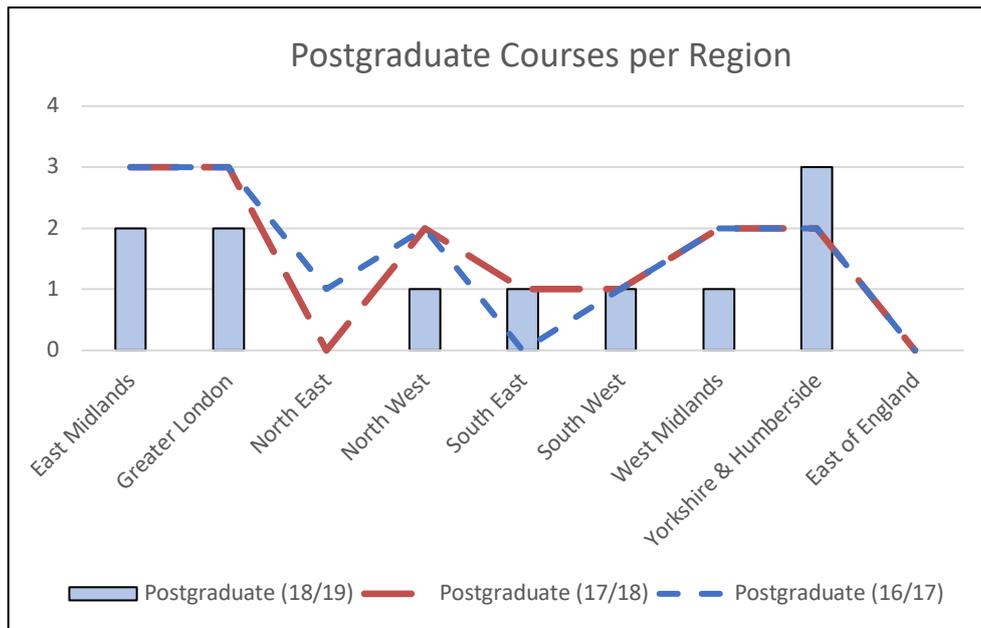
Both the number of HEIs offering programmes, and the number of programmes offered are at record lows, but there are positive indications that the downward trend may be halted.

4 new programmes will be taking students in 2020, and discussion are ongoing with others.

5.2 Regional Analysis of Courses



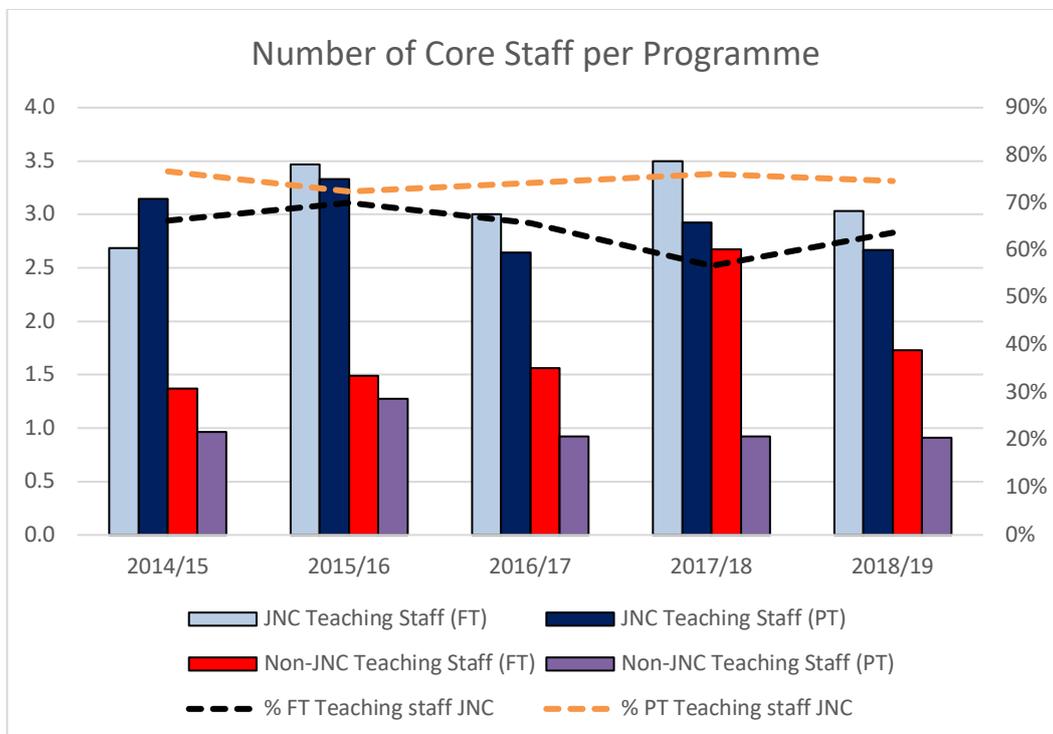
Most regions have experienced a reduction in the number of undergraduate courses per region, and the East of England remains without. There are no discussions underway with HEIs to reintroduce courses in this region.



The past two academic years have seen no postgraduate courses in either the North East or East of England. However, there is confirmation of a new postgraduate course in the North East that will be accepting students from 2020, and at least 2 HEIs currently offer distance learning options.

There may be an opportunity to expand the uptake of distance learning offers in future years, due to necessity of Covid-19 restrictions on universities and practice; this should be explored.

5.3 Staffing Levels

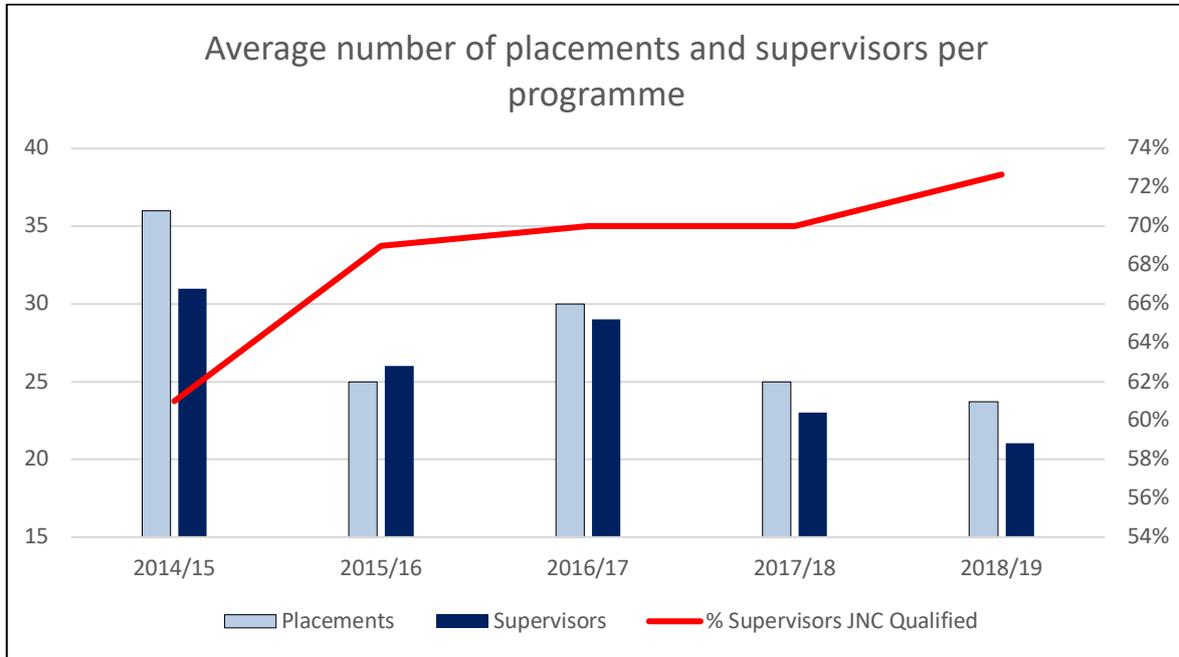


Aside from an increase in the proportion of non-JNC teaching staff in 2017/18 the data on the number of JNC teaching staff per programme are not significantly different to previous years.

5.4 Fieldwork Placements

The average number of placements and supervisors per programme has declined over the same period, although there is some mitigation in the fact that the reduction is in line with there being fewer students.

Of note, the percentage of supervisors who are JNC qualified has increased, and is now in line with levels a decade ago.



In recent years, institutions have voiced this area as one that causes concern, due to:

- A reduction in the number of statutory funded youth services affecting both the number of available placements and geographical proximity.
- The reduced number of JNC qualified staff in youth services, making it more difficult to find a JNC-qualified supervisor as per requirements.
 - *Increasingly, students are working in a multi-agency settings where professionals manage and supervise. Consequently, working with a non-JNC supervisor is inevitable.*
- The fact that many students struggle to fulfil placement requirements alongside caring, employment, or other responsibilities.
 - This is especially compounded where placements are only available outside of 'school hours'.

However, there are some good practices which can help to mitigate these concerns somewhat:

- Ensure that supervisors are given support to counter the fact they were from different sectors, non-JNC qualified, or new to youth work supervision, including:
 - *host supervisor briefings... to ensure consistency in understanding of the requirements and assessment criteria.*
 - *checks ... ensure supervisors have a good grasp of youth work principles and practices as well as the underpinning values. We provide detailed handbooks and annual briefings for new and existing supervisors to promote the sharing of good practice*
 - *when we feel that the agency's specific 'experience' would be beneficial to the student's learning/development, but no JNC qualified worker is available, the University*

employs an additional Fieldwork JNC qualified person to undertake the supervision assessment element of the placement

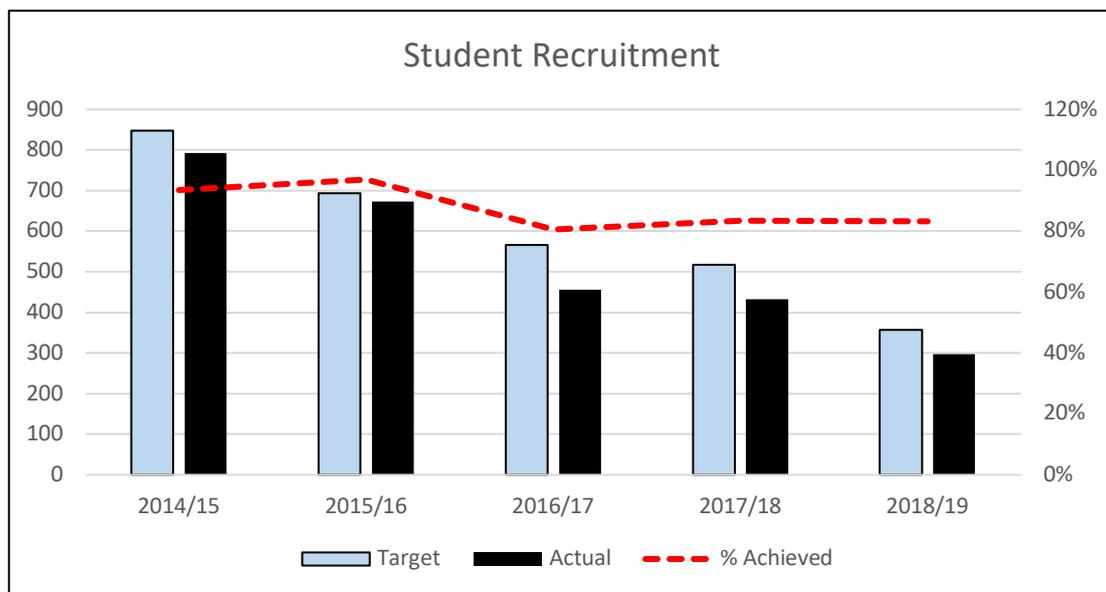
HEIs who were best able to manage finding suitable placements were those who mentioned having strong links with services in their areas, either through the Local Authority or through well-connected colleagues.

5.5 Recruitment and Student Numbers

The recruitment of student numbers continues to fall, with just under 300 being recorded as having been recruited this year. 2009 was the last year that recruitment was above target.

HEIs attributed various reasons for this, including:

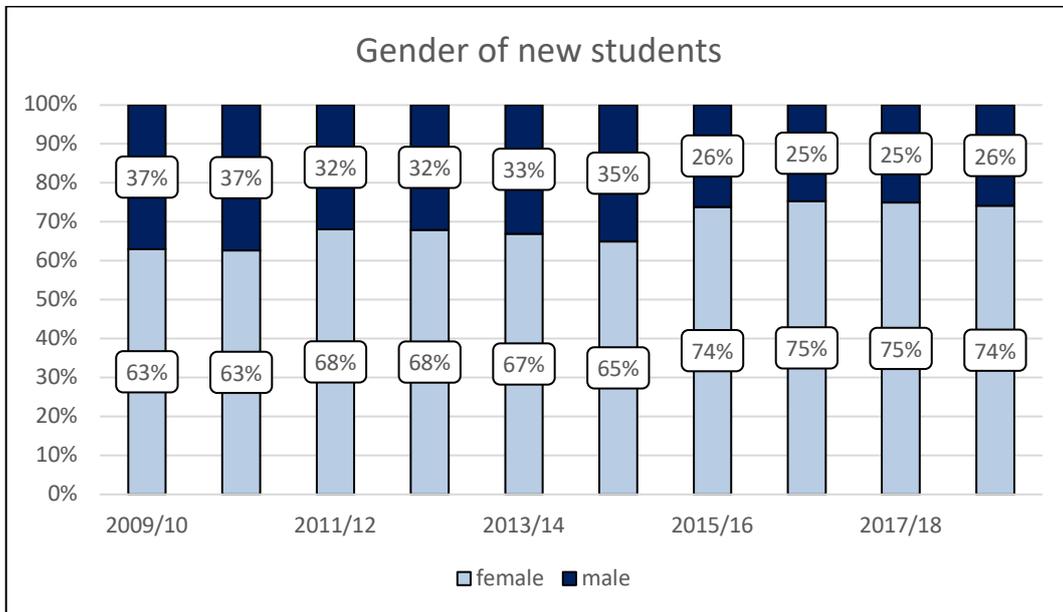
- *The drop in recruitment numbers is heavily linked to cuts in youth services with employers having limited or no staff development budgets*
- *Financial constraints continue to impact on the ability of students to afford fees*
- *The lack of job adverts asking for a degree in Youth Work*
- *A loss of 'pipeline' as the number of youth services reduces*
- *A lower profile for youth work than in the past*



5.6 New Student Demographics - Gender

There is continuing trend of a large gender imbalance in student recruitment. Whilst this has always been evident it has become increasingly divergent since 2015/16, with 3 in 4 students now female.

No potential reasons for this were given in the responses.

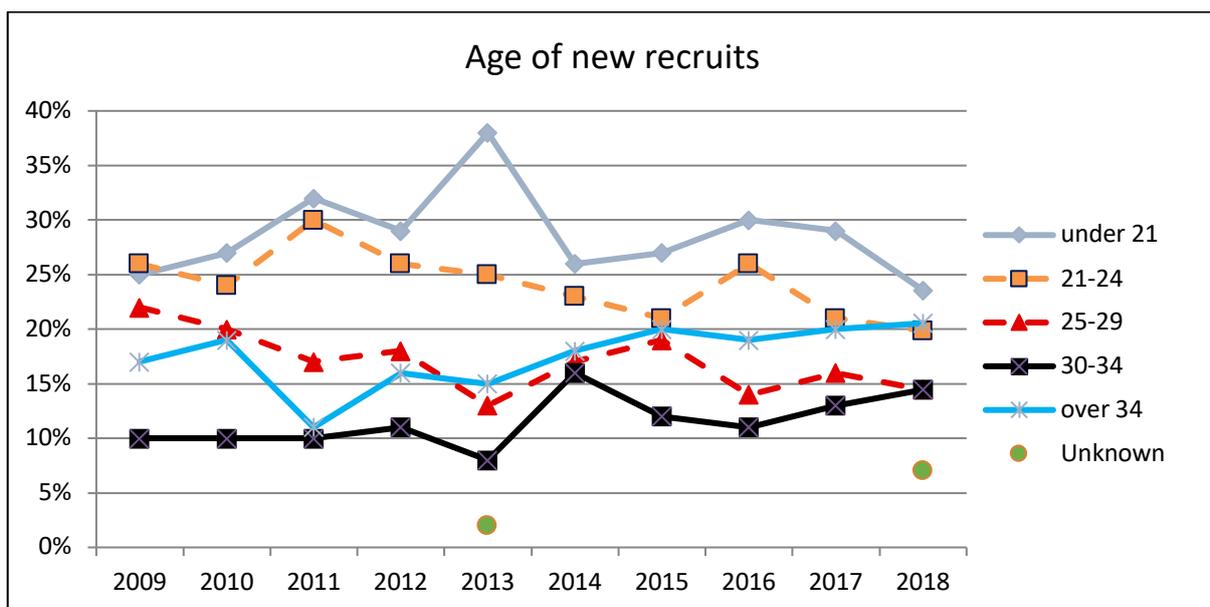


*NB – The data collection does not allow for any other gender denominations

5.7 New Student Demographics – Age

The majority of new students continues to come from the those under 25, or those over 34, a trend evident for the past five years.

However, this year the proportion of those under the age of 21 dipped below 25% for the first time (although in mitigation, the ages of 7% of new recruits was not known).

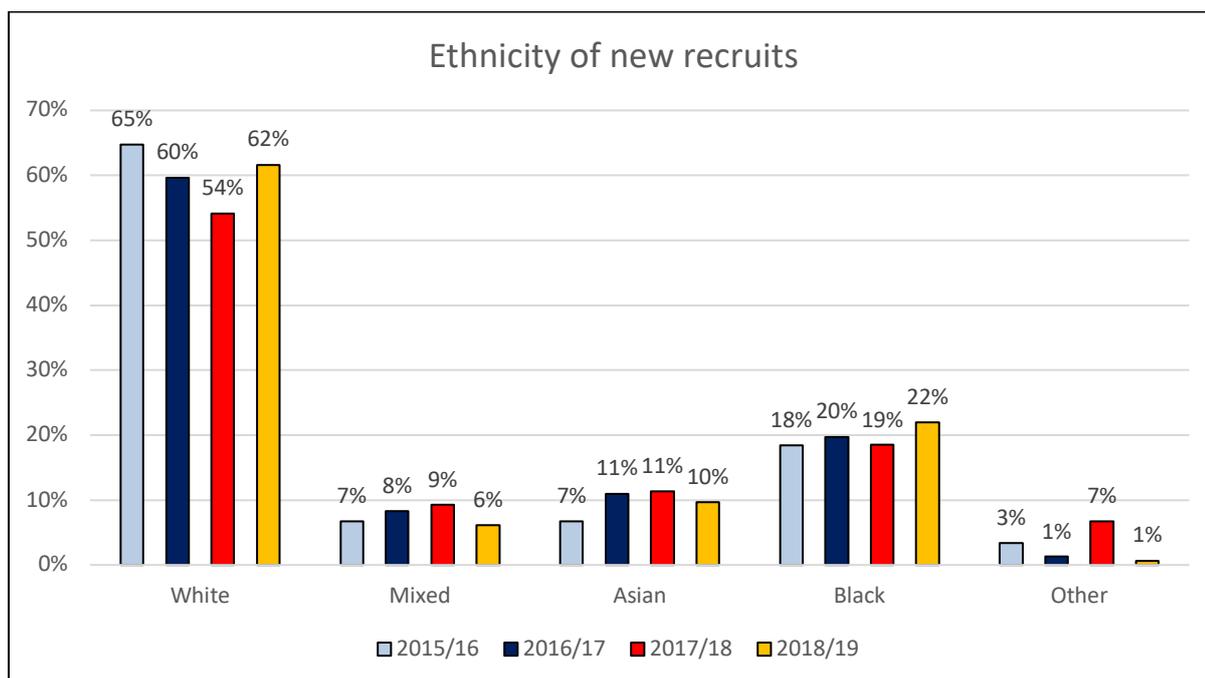


From next year, the new data collection method will have been operational for 3 full years and analysis will be able to differentiate trends between undergraduate and postgraduate entrants for a more accurate reflection of entrants' ages relative to the level of each qualification.

5.8 New Student Demographics – Ethnicity

Data on ethnicity is collected in accordance with the categories recommended by the Commission for Racial Equality, based on the Census. Information is requested under sixteen categories of ethnic origin which can be summarised into seven main groupings as per below.

The intake of students continues to be increasingly more diverse than the UK average for all HE student enrolments. Last year, 3 white Gypsy or Irish travellers were recorded, and this year 1 Arab, the first such instances of these ethnicities being represented.



5.9 New Student Demographics – Disability

Over the past five years the percentage of new recruits with a disability has consistently been near the 20% mark, with 3% to 6% of all students registered disabled. There is no further breakdown available regarding the types of disability, but the figure of 20% is higher than the UK average across all HE courses for the same period which stands at c. 12%.

5.10 New Student Demographics – Qualifications at Entry

Postgraduate courses are naturally well populated with students who have at least a degree level qualification, with 90% of all students holding a degree. The other students have accreditation of prior experiential learning.

Of concern is a continued trend downwards in the amount of new undergraduate recruits who have at least a Level 3 (A-Level equivalent) as their highest qualification upon entry. This, combined with a smaller proportion of undergraduate students being 21 or under, suggests that youth work is not a favoured route for those leaving formal education, and may be a contributory reason to students failing due 'academic failure'.

5.11 Current students – Attendance

Overall, attendance rates remain high, with nearly all students at each level being reported to have at least 80% attendance.

The attendance rate of full-time Level 4 students remains the exception, having only 80%+ attendance once in the last four years, with 81% attendance in 2016/17.

Reasons for low attendance were not given in enough quantity to provide explanations for this year, but for previous years have included:

- Demands on a caring role
- Childcare issues (particularly child illness)
- Other family / household barriers

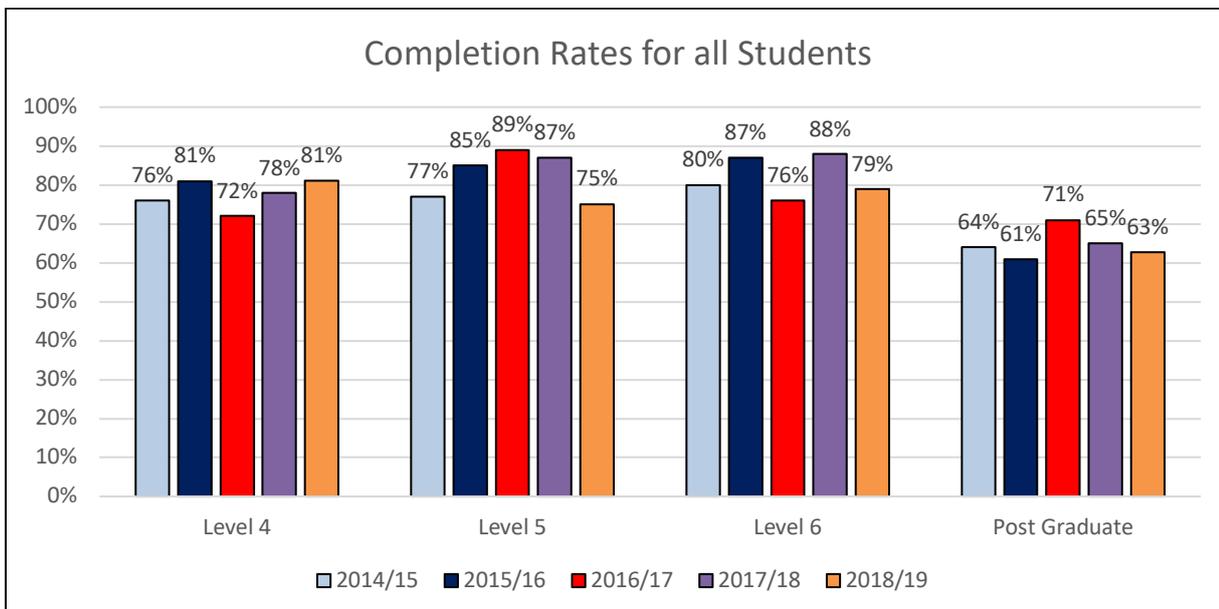
Recommendations are laid out in section 3.0 which may help to mitigate against these pressures and improve overall attendance.

5.12 Current students – Retention and completion

The rates of expected student completion of courses show a distinct pattern, in that completion rates are usually lowest for undergraduates at Level 4, and highest at Level 6.

Expected Postgraduate completion rates remains within the 60% to 70% mark. However, several HEIs have set their professional qualification at PgDip and many students aim for this qualification. The 'lower' completion rate for Postgraduates does not account for this.

A PgDip is still a JNC qualification and a successful result for those students who do not wish to complete the full MA qualification, with comments suggesting that the lower rates are often due to some students not being able to fund themselves beyond a PgDip, whilst the first part is sponsored by employers.

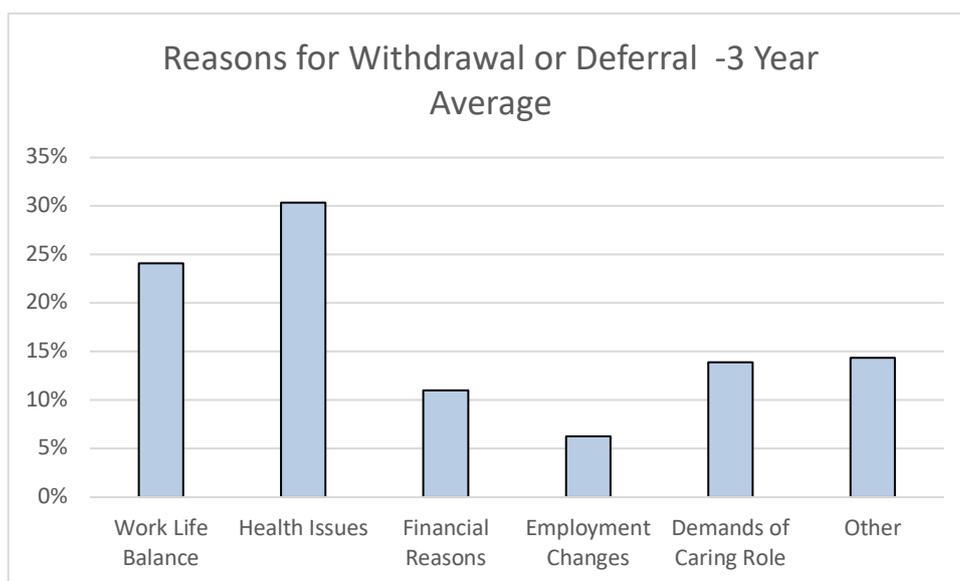


This year has seen completion rates at Level 4 continuing to rise, which suggests that the more flexible and extra pastoral support systems being introduced by HEIs for those who need it, are succeeding in enabling more students to complete the programme requirements where they are able. This is borne out in lower rates of withdrawal.

However, whilst HEIs are succeeding in providing greater pastoral support, the lower rate of completions for Levels 5 and 6 are mostly attributable to 'academic' failure, and suggests that the greater proportion of students undertaking degrees without a Level 3 qualification (A-level equivalent) is hampering their ability to progress.

5.13 Current students – Withdrawal

Rates of withdrawal have decline over each of the past 3 years, and credit must be given to HEIs for this. Consistent themes in reasons for withdrawal do suggest that more targeted interventions and support may be able to improve this further.

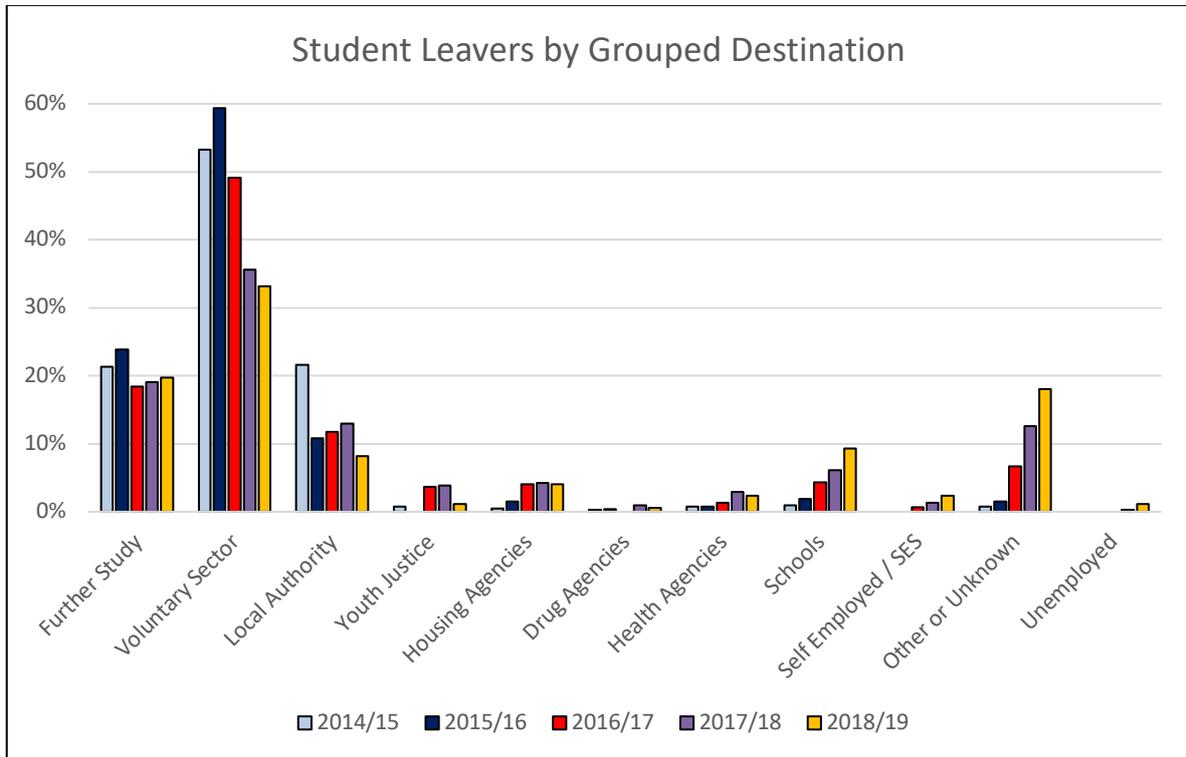


Comments within the feedback suggest that provision of more flexible fieldwork placements could be beneficial. For example, some students have caring, employment or parental responsibilities which limits their available time to partake in placements. The availability of placements is, however, limited due to the requirements for JNC supervision and that many services operate in the times where the student's other responsibilities are needed.

There are no trends within 'other' reasons.

N.B. There is nothing within the data to identify whether the increasing amount of 'academic failure' is contributing to withdrawals citing issues with work-life balance or health – this should be explored.

5.14 – Destination of Graduates



As with previous years the returns for destination of graduates are incomplete with many HEIs not recording it, not being able to follow-up with students, or unable to provide this for the current year due to their own collection of this data not having taken place by the time of ours. There have therefore been increasing proportions of students whose destination is ‘unknown’.

It is clear, however, that the diversity of employment for graduates is increasing, especially in educational settings. Feedback received this year suggests that this may in part be due to the increasing diversity of placement settings:

“new placement opportunities continue to materialise - mainly in schools and the voluntary sector”

“our students are securing placements within a wide range of settings, this mirrors potential employment opportunities”

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[@natyouthagency](https://twitter.com/natyouthagency)

nya@nya.org.uk

0116 242 7350

Registration No. 2912597 | Charity No. 1035804
National Youth Agency, 9 Newarke Steet, Leicester LE1 5SN

NYA
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