

## Editorial Action on Access monthly eBulletin December 2025

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Welcome to the December **Action on Access eBulletin**.

This **eBulletin** resumes the continuing dissection of the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper together with related items on some Autumn Budget implications and the latest information on Ref 2029. An International Student Levy of £925 per student per year of study will be reinvested into Higher Education and Skills, including to fund maintenance grants for disadvantaged students studying priority courses. The Autumn Budget reveals that Universities receive £6.4bn a year less for teaching students compared to a decade ago. We see more indications of how the FE and HE sectors might be being led to a more coherent tertiary system bringing together Skills, technical education, modularity, articulation of courses, apprenticeships and the LLE.

The two Youth Matters Strategy documents from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport paint us a picture of life for English under-18s, "focusing on areas where England falls behind internationally and providing targeted support to those that need it most to unlock their full potential, ensuring a more equitable and hopeful future for all." The Strategy aims primarily to open up choices and chances to young people in England who are out of education, employment, and training (the NEET).

The data for the end of the 2025 application cycle has just been published by UCAS, providing a pretty similarly consistent picture with the previous year's data; and taking into account post-pandemic effects and the increasing numbers of 18 year olds in the UK population. Regionally, data shows over 50% of 18 year olds in the London region apply, with approximately 33% from all other regions. An interesting new feature this year shows the percentage of those applicants intending to live at home: 31% across IMD Quintiles. In terms of ethnicity, the White ethnic group is still showing the lowest 18-year-old participation entry rate at 29%. There has been a slight (3%) decline for mature students. Also, 25% of 18-year-old applicants are declaring that they have mental health issues, challenges or conditions; or a disability.

We are still in UK Disability History Month (20 November - 20 December) and the OfS reflects on their recent Disability Briefing with comments from their Disability Advisory Group members.

Many congratulations to our Network member, IntoUniversity, who received their 250,000<sup>th</sup> young person onto their programmes of support into Higher Education - from a standing start of 75 students when they began in 2002. IntoUniversity is now working through 45 centres across England and Scotland in a programme supporting young people from primary school to graduation and beyond with some even becoming employed through IntoUniversity in their Graduate internships. And they could not do it without their University partners. You can read their story [here](#).

We are pleased to include as this Month's Guest Article, Network member, the Unite Foundation's 'Blueprint for a #HomeAtUniversity' launched last month. It provides a guide to support Universities in building a safe and stable home for care experienced and estranged students at University - a key part of which has been the provision of free accommodation for a full three-year period, including vacations, for what is now almost 900 students. As well as direct student support, the Unite Foundation pursues active lobbying and interaction with policy makers as well as senior staff in Universities.

This month's **eBulletin** comprises, as usual, a potent mixture of the last four week's happenings - full of comment, information, resources; and our listings of events, conferences and vacancies and seeks to bring your attention to some of the winds of change blowing us into 2026.

However you celebrate, have a relaxing and joyous time,

Andrew