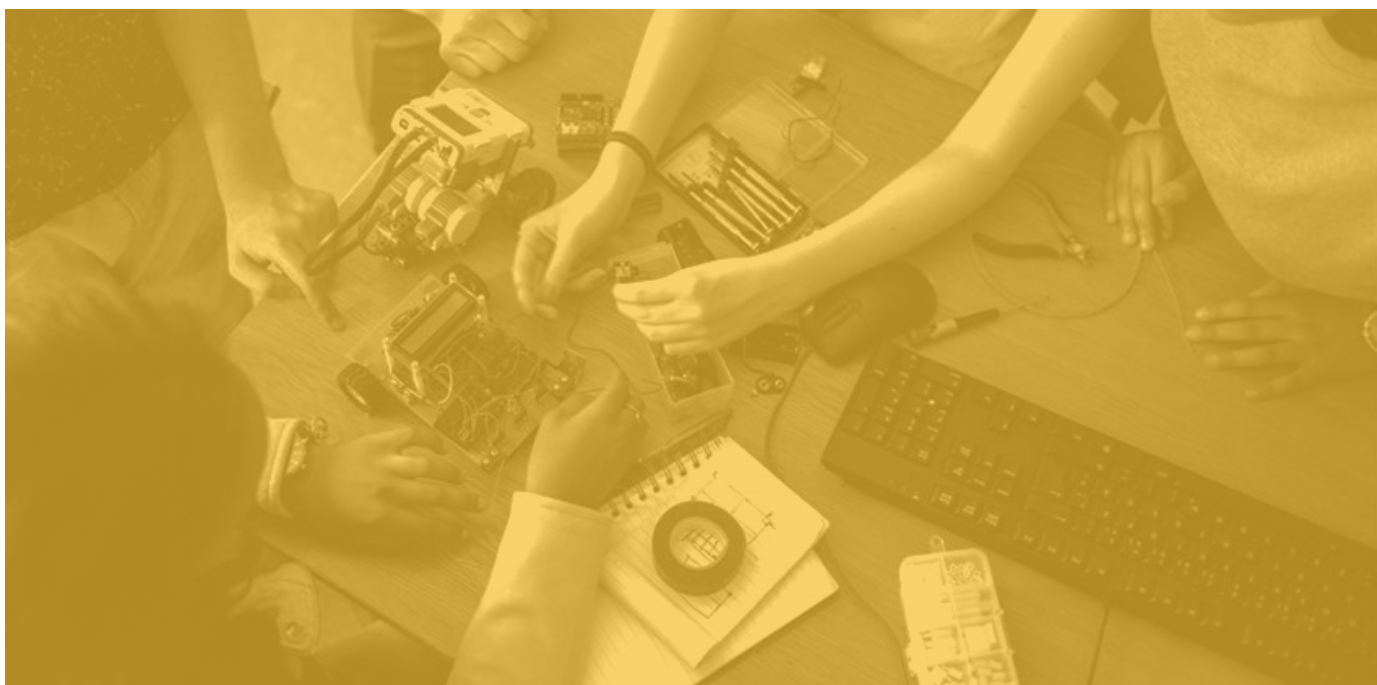


Learning beyond the classroom: Provision and Participation



The State of The Nation 2022

A series of evidence-based reports examining the impact and importance of learning beyond the classroom in modern Britain

An annual research project from Children's University Trust

Written by Liam Nolan and Cordelia Howard with data analysis by Sukie Duhra

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This report is one of a series of evidence-based reports examining the impact of what goes on beyond the classroom on the lives of children and young people.

Based on extensive data collated from a bespoke digital platform, Children's University Online, the aim of the reports is to inform and improve provision by providing educators, policy makers and stakeholders of all kinds with a broad set of insights about the current state of learning beyond the classroom in contemporary Britain.

Our 2022 reports are informed by data from:

- 50,000 children
- 12,000 activities
- 310,000 hours of recorded participation.

To download the rest of our reports, visit:

childrensuniversity.co.uk/stateofthenation

Children's University: Our reach



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The role that learning beyond the classroom plays in skills development



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The impact of learning beyond the classroom



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Learning beyond the classroom: links and recommendations for policy makers



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Thank you for reading

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Learning beyond the classroom: Provision and Participation

Introduction

“By mapping local provision and the participation of young people, it is our aim that we can inform future provision, highlight barriers to participation, and play a key role in improving accessibility and opportunities for young people.”

What children do within the classroom is documented, measured and, because of the curriculum, remains uniform across age-groups. However, huge sections of a child’s life fall within the grey area between school, home, community, and their own particular interests. A snapshot of academic classroom achievement is only part of a child’s story. The community assets around a child and the opportunities available to them hold the potential to impact positively on their lives. Similarly knowing what a child does once the school day is over can help educators support them and holds influence on classroom achievement. The combination and contrast between what is available to young people and what they choose to do, or are able to access, tells a unique story for each child.

In February this year, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published findings from around 6,000 young people across the country. Young people told the DCMS to prioritise three things: regular clubs and activities, adventures away from home, and volunteering opportunities – all activities beyond the classroom. As a result they launched the National Youth Guarantee, thereby pledging that *“By 2025, every young person will have access to regular out of school activities, adventures away from home and opportunities to volunteer”*.¹

However, despite the pledge to invest £560m, the majority of this will benefit only a few key organisations, and most of it will be focused on those young people of secondary school age. With changes in leadership at the DCMS since the pledge was made and current political unrest, how this pledge will fare to 2025 and be monitored is unclear. What is clear, however, is that the DCMS and others will need a real-time picture of youth provision if their pledge to “every young person” is to be realised.

In the House of Commons Education Committee’s report, *Is the Catch-up Programme fit for purpose?* of May this year, it was recommended that *“The Department must introduce a pilot of optional extra-curricular activities for children to help improve academic attainment and wellbeing”*.²

It’s all very well for there to be ‘pledges’ and ‘guarantees’ like this, as well as a public push on wellbeing and mental health for young people post-Covid, but these are empty gestures when no one is looking at the full picture of provision and participation.

Footnotes:

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-review-summary-findings-and-government-response/youth-review-summary-findings-and-government-response#:~:text=Through%20the%20Youth%20Review%2C%20DCMS,ambitions%20on%20'levelling%20up'>
2. <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/9251/documents/160043/default/> p6

Learning beyond the classroom: Provision and Participation

“It is our aim that we can inform provision, highlight barriers to participation, and play a key role in improving accessibility and chances for young people.”

Children’s University reports on provision and participation data beyond the classroom. No other organisation takes such a consistent and broad approach to learning in this space. The Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted ensure that schools offer enrichment and well-being activities for pupils, but their responsibility ends at the school gates. Community organisations and local authorities support their communities best when assets are mapped and connections are made, but unfortunately this is not standard practice.

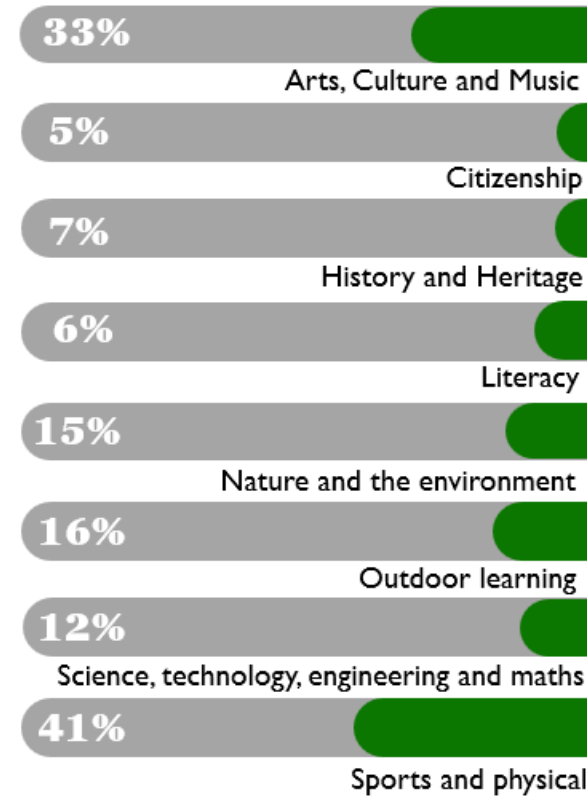
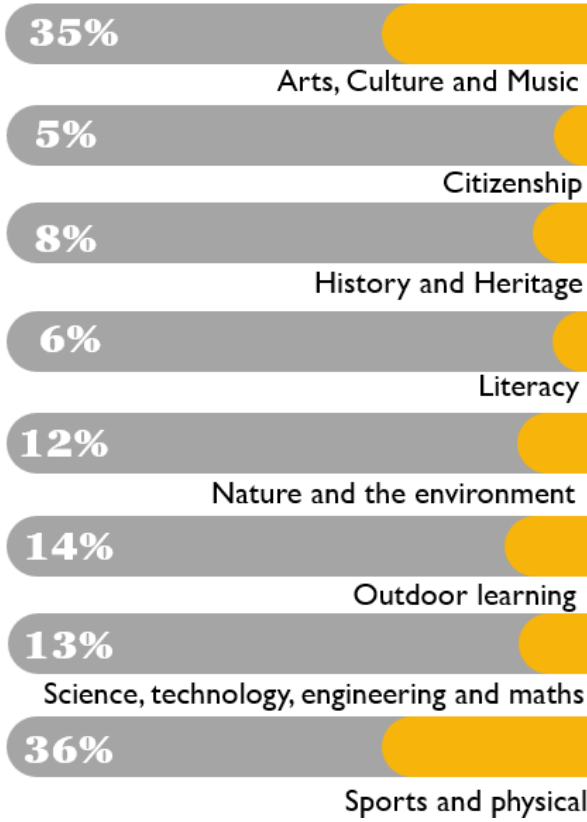
As schools recover from the pandemic and reassess priorities in light of spending cuts and soaring energy bills, it falls on organisations like Children’s University to share this data. By mapping local provision and the participation of young people, it is our aim that we can inform future provision, highlight barriers to participation, and play a key role in improving accessibility and opportunities for young people.

This past year has seen arts pushed further out of the classroom, but what impact does that have on activities beyond the classroom? Financially, families are stretched more than ever, so what does this mean for participation in family learning activities and what paid-for activities children can do? We hope our data set helps raise these questions and more, and, importantly, shines a guiding light towards some of the answers.

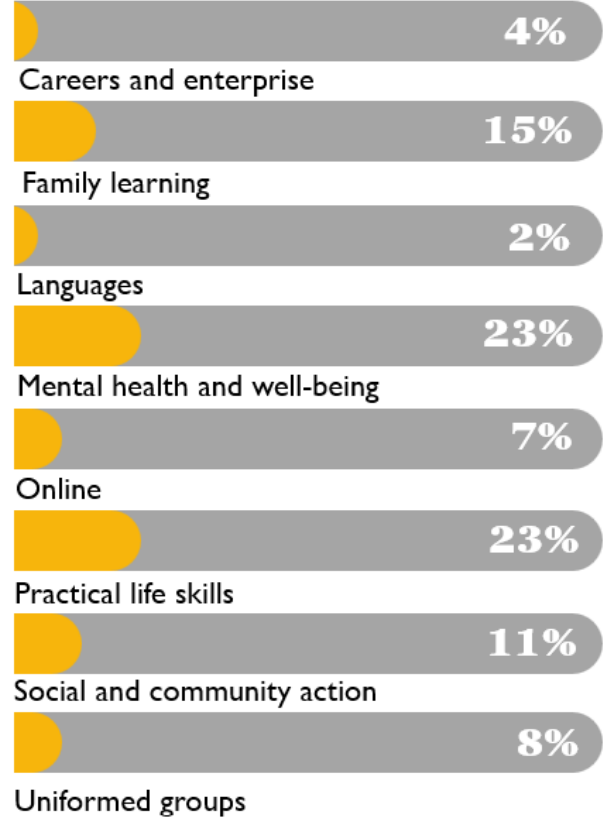
On the following pages you will find our data highlighting national provision and participation. To provide this Children’s University has analysed a unique data set of 12,000+ activities, fully profiled and validated (i.e. quality assured). This is what we are talking about when we reference provision. Alongside this, we have analysed over 310,000 hours of participation in these activities, as reported directly by almost 50,000 children. It is this provision and participation data that forms the microcosm of learning beyond the classroom that is detailed and analysed in this report.

Categorisation of activities

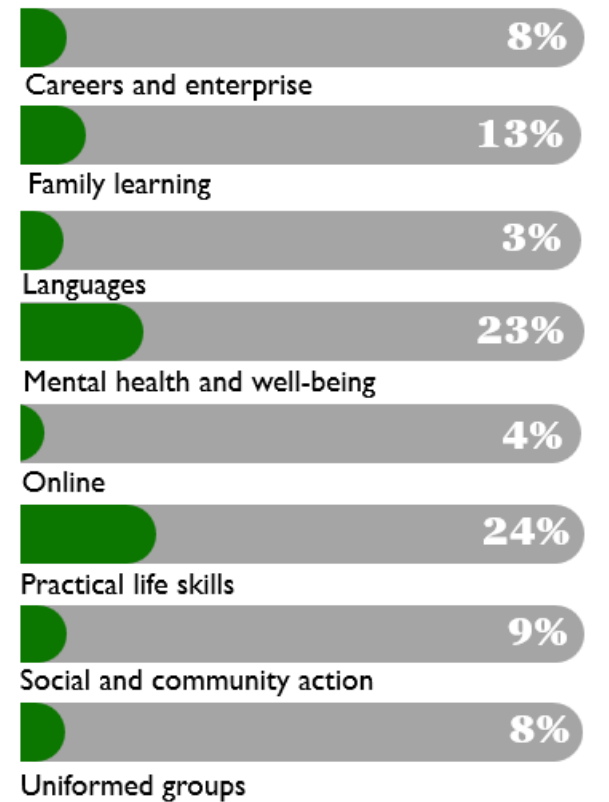
All validated activities are tagged with up to four thematic categories of learning. Using this data we are able to provide a side-by-side look at what activities are available to children (Provision) and how that compares to the activities that children have actually done in the past year (Participation). This data covers the period July 2021 – August 2022. Here we can see the percentage of activities tagged in each category.



Provision

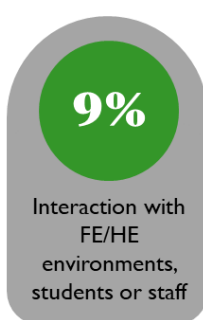
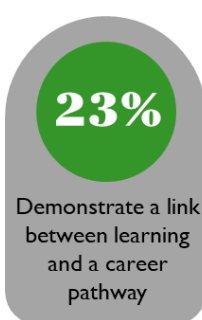
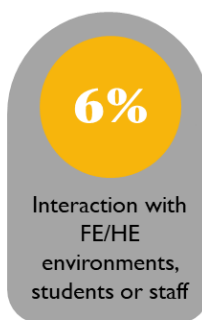
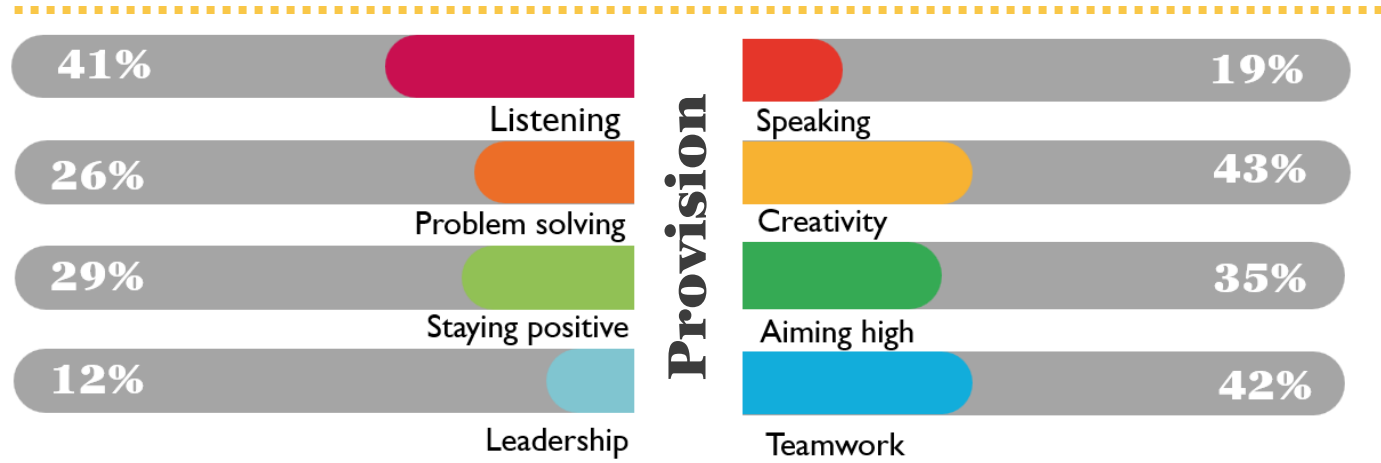


Participation



Activities tagged by skills

Just as all activities are tagged with relevant learning categories, so too are they tagged with up to three skills, in line with the 8 essential skills of the Skills Builder framework. These tags reflect the skills that the activity providers believe best link to those that children will use and develop through participation.



Provision

Participation

Our activities are also tagged with engagement information in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks 4, 5, 6 and 7 to support best practice careers guidance.

Location and cost

Children's University validates activities from all manner of providers; from major national partners to local one-person trainers. As well as tagging with learning categories, skills, and Gatsby links, we also record whether activities are free-of-charge or costed, and whether they take place in schools or elsewhere.

Provision



69%

31%



83%

17%



Participation

Our data shows that children are heavily reliant on free activities in order to engage with learning beyond the classroom

Even though a significant percentage of activities available for children (69%) are free of charge, the cost of some activities is still a barrier. The majority of participation (83%) in learning beyond the classroom is only possible when there is no associated cost to take part.

Provision



62%

38%



31%

69%



Participation

Our data shows that children are reliant on schools in order to engage with learning beyond the classroom

A wide variety of organisations run activities and opportunities for children beyond the classroom (62% of our validated activities take place outside of schools) yet the majority of participation (69% of it) still happens within schools. There is huge scope to improve access to the myriad of opportunities that exist in communities and beyond schools for our children, and for external organisations to support schools in providing learning activities outside the classroom, lessening the burden on schools to provide extra-curricular enrichment led by teachers.

Summary of findings

- 1. The gap between skills provision and participation levels could be read as a disconnect in providers' understanding of the role that their work plays in support of learning beyond the classroom**
- 2. If National Youth Guarantee pledges are to be met, DCMS and DfE need to monitor provision of opportunities for young people beyond the classroom, particularly at an earlier age. While it remains unknown how monitoring of provision will be done, this report offers a viable option**
- 3. There needs to be more free activities, or subsidised access to activities through schemes such as activity vouchers for those that need financial support. This is the only way to ensure there is universal entitlement to learning beyond the classroom**
- 4. The impact of investment in focused thematic areas through organisations such as Arts Council England and Sport England is clear in provision levels, but if we are serious about increasing provision of activities in other categories, then similar investment is needed there too**
- 5. Young people are more socially and environmentally conscious than ever, yet there are relatively few opportunities for them to engage beyond the classroom in citizenship and social action**
- 6. Funded opportunities for children to go into businesses and engage in careers-focused learning activities are needed to address young people's understanding of the jobs available, and to support careers education in schools**

Summary of findings

- 7. Despite Office for Students (OFS) work and the commitment of Universities to widening access, only 6% of provision links to FE and HE environments. Universities should consider validating all outreach initiatives with Children's University**

- 8. The cost-of-living crisis cannot be allowed to further impact children from lower income backgrounds disproportionately in terms of learning beyond the classroom, or to prevent schools from increasing or continuing with extra-curricular provision. There is significant demand for free activities and most children participate in activities provided by schools**

Want to take action or learn more?

Validate your activities

If you run activities for children and young people, or you know someone who does, you can get these activities validated and added to those that Children's University signposts participants to. This is a great way to add value to your activities and reward participation. Find out more and fill out a basic online form [here](#)

Contact your nearest Children's University

You can find your nearest Children's University online and contact them to find out more about the work they do locally. All Children's Universities are managed by socially-minded and community-based institutions who partner with local businesses, education providers and stakeholders of all kinds. Talk about how you could get involved and find your local contact [here](#)

Be a vocal ambassador for our work

Learning beyond the classroom is key to making a life-changing difference to children and young people. Do share this report and the recommendations it contains. Children's University Trust is keen to ensure that the data we collate is shared with those who can use it to inform and improve provision for all children and young people.

Read more

- To read more about provision and what is available for children and young people, you can read the National Youth Agency's (NYA) National Youth Sector Census results [here](#)
- To read more about the cost-of-living crisis and its impact on education, you can read the Child Poverty Action Group's (CPAG) Cost of the School Day resources [here](#)