



Evaluation Briefing

Access Grant Funding – Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) August 2025

Grant Overview

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) awarded The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) £4.2 million (Ref. A2689) over three financial years (FY) (2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25) to break down barriers and increase access to the DofE, by supporting mainstream schools, Additional Needs and Alternative Provision (ANAP) settings and community organisations. The aim was to start delivering the DofE through a package of start-up support.

Grant objectives

The funding sought to deliver four primary objectives by March 2025:

- Identify and remove barriers for 170 mainstream secondary schools to start delivering the DofE through a tailored package of support.
- Enable 68 ANAP organisations to become Licensed Organisations (LOs) and deliver the DofE.
- Develop a new strategic partnership approach with the youth sector to establish a DofE offer at a grassroots level and license 105 new community organisations.
- Improve the wellbeing of young people and help them to develop skills for life and work by expanding the reach, number and range of regular activities for young people that drive these outcomes.

In FY 2022/23, the DofE received c.£370k additional funding from DCMS and the Grant Agreement was amended to include the following objective:

- Support at least 110 organisations already delivering the DofE to sustain and expand their provision to reach between 250 – 1,000 marginalised young people.

Evaluation purpose

The evaluation reviewed the DCMS grant funding programme delivered by DofE between FY 2022/23 and 2024/25. It addressed key questions under the following themes:

- **Implementation and Reach:** Were barriers to participation removed? How was the programme delivered and what was its reach? What difference did the funding make for young people, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds?
- **Feedback and Improvement:** What did organisations and young people think of the project? How was feedback used to improve implementation? What lessons can inform future initiatives?
- **Partnership and Collaboration:** How effective was the strategic partnerships approach? How did collaboration function and what communication channels were used? Were there any conflicts and how were they resolved?

Scope and Methodology

This evaluation adopted a combined approach which considered both **process** and **impact**.

The process evaluation was conducted by internal DofE colleagues and explored how the DofE programme was implemented across different organisations from both grant-making and operational delivery perspectives, identifying what worked well, challenges encountered, and changes made in response to stakeholder feedback.

The impact evaluation was conducted by State of Life, in coordination with the DofE, and assessed the outcomes for young people taking part in the DofE in DCMS supported, Access Grant funded, mainstream schools, focusing on wellbeing, skills, community ties and being active.

A mixed-methods approach was used to integrate both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

Quantitative methods:

- Data collected from participants via the DofE's Impact Measurement Framework (IMF) survey, analysed by State of Life, including both descriptive and regression analyses, and an exploration of statistically significant findings;
- Enrolment data collected from eDofE;
- Licence termination data captured in the DofE's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system;
- Data collected from DofE Managers in funding reports (binary and scaled responses).

Qualitative methods:

- Data collected from DofE Managers in funding reports (open-ended responses);
- Case studies and stories;
- Lesson learning workshop with DofE Operations staff;
- Feedback from DofE staff and DofE Managers in LOs.

Key findings

1. Reach Targets

The programme exceeded its reach targets. The DofE exceeded the initial ambition in schools and ANAP by supporting 300 new organisations, enabling over 23,000 young people to participate in the Award. In collaboration with funding from the Department for Education (DfE), the initiative reached a total of **590 new mainstream and ANAP settings and over 45,000 young people**.

"The funding was essential to our DofE delivery because it directly supports young people by breaking down financial barriers, providing access to resources, and enabling inclusive participation. With the funding, we have empowered participants to develop key skills like resilience, teamwork, and leadership, while fostering confidence and ambition that will shape their futures. Ultimately, your support helps us unlock potential and create opportunities for young people to thrive." – Colton Hills Community School

2. Barriers to Participation

Some barriers to participation were successfully removed – **the funding package effectively addressed the main obstacles preventing organisations from delivering the DofE**. The available evidence suggests that financial barriers were reduced through licence fee support,

equipment grants, and funded Participation Places, which enabled many young people from deprived areas to take part. However, learning has indicated that the funding programme alone did not remove the barrier of limited staff capacity in funded organisations (both in mainstream schools and ANAP settings), which in some cases has limited the ability to continue to deliver the DofE.¹

"As a small provision with students who come from very deprived, and sometimes disrupted home environments, this funding has given the school the opportunity to make available to our students resources that their families would not have been able to provide. With the complex social emotional and mental health issues that affect the students here, the funding we have received has opened doors of opportunity and pathways for learning that would previously have been unavailable to our young people." – Westside School

3. Community Reach

This grant also laid the crucial groundwork in widening the DofE's community reach. The programme developed strategic partnerships with seven national organisations, licensed and funded 28 network organisations and supported over 500 additional Participation Places, demonstrating an expansion of access to the DofE across a more diverse range of organisations and communities. The move towards setting up strategic partnerships is also an encouraging step towards promoting sustainable delivery.

"DofE shows a different side of yourself that you didn't know existed."
– Summer, DofE Bronze participant

4. Stakeholder perspectives

A survey included in the final funding reports, completed by 279 DofE leaders in both mainstream schools and ANAP settings, indicated that those leading DofE felt that the Award had contributed to positive impact among participants. For example:

- 92% of DofE Leaders reported that young people from marginalised backgrounds could access suitable Award activities;
- 95% of DofE Leaders agreed that the funding enabled more marginalised young people to take part in the DofE Award.

5. Impact

Available impact data suggests that young people achieved positive outcomes whilst completing a DofE Award in mainstream schools. **The impact data suggests that young people improved their wellbeing, skills, community ties and physical activity** from the start to end of their Award journeys.²

"When you go outdoors, it's amazing ... It makes me feel happy and cheerful to be honest."
– Farrell, DofE Bronze participant

¹ By the end of the project in March 2025, 14 mainstream/ANAP settings had terminated their licence (5% of all funded settings on project)

² These videos further illustrate the positive outcomes from Access funding:

- [Access Without Limits: Funding for Schools - YouTube](#)
- [Access Without Limits: Get to know Thomasson Memorial School for the Deaf - YouTube](#)
- [Access Without Limits: Inspire Youth Zone - YouTube](#)

Impact Measurement Framework (IMF) findings

Findings from the analysis of IMF data for a sample of 1,207 young people in mainstream schools highlighted the following key findings. This included both descriptive and regression statistical analysis.

- DofE participants in targeted schools are much more likely to be from a deprived area than DofE generally:
 - In targeted schools in Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 1-4, 54% live in IMD 1-4, compared to 18% in DofE generally,
 - Even in targeted schools in IMD 5-10, participants are from more deprived areas (29% in IMD 1-4 compared to 18%).
- Our findings suggest that DofE in targeted schools has a positive effect on participants over and above the benefit experienced in DofE generally, in almost all areas of the study:
 - 8 out of 12 outcome measures improve by more than DofE generally,
 - 2 out of 12 improve by a similar amount, and 2 show fewer improvements.
- In targeted schools, 58% of participants are male compared to 44% in DofE generally.
- In targeted schools, 44% of participants are from a minority ethnic background compared to 25% in DofE generally.
- There appears to be a positive wellbeing impact of DofE in targeted schools in London, the South and urban areas.
- Increase in life satisfaction scores are highest in schools with lower proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Note: 'DofE generally' refers to findings from the 2023-2024 annual statistics in relation to the sample; otherwise, it refers to the 2024 Impact Report. This covered LOs delivering in regular settings, including DfE and DCMS funded settings and excluded Special and Educational Needs (SEND) settings, prisons and Young Offender Institutes. DofE are working to adapt their Impact Measurement Framework for these settings.

For more details on the findings, the full report can be read here: [Access Impact Report & Technical Report](#).

Conclusions

- The DCMS grant funding programme increased access to the DofE across England, surpassing targets. Data also demonstrates an expansion of access to the DofE across a more diverse range of organisations and communities.
- The funding successfully removed barriers to participation, enabling thousands of young people to participate and access the benefits of the DofE Award.
- The strategic partnerships approach proved effective in extending reach and creating new and potentially sustainable delivery models.

- The programme demonstrated a trend of young people experiencing positive outcomes in wellbeing, community ties, skills and physical activity.
- Funded organisations (both mainstream schools and ANAP) continued to face challenges in adequately allocating staff capacity to deliver the Award. This had practical implications on the ability of staff to deliver the Award and in a small number of cases has led to settings terminating their licence. This is important learning for DofE to consider as it continues to improve its package of support and moves forward with realising its ambitions to widen access to DofE and remove barriers to participation.

Looking forward

- The DofE will continue to work with funded organisations to understand the barriers they face to their continued DofE delivery and work with organisations to overcome these where possible, whether through additional funding or other means.
- The DofE will take forward the learnings and successes from this programme to continue to expand reach to the Award via the FY2025/26 grant funding programme which looks to target ANAP settings as well as mainstream schools located in IMD 1-5.
- The DofE will continue to collect impact data from participants in funded organisations using the IMF. This will allow further exploration into the impact of participation in the Award with a larger sample size. The DofE is also currently adapting our IMF for young people doing their DofE in ANAP settings, in prisons and Young Offender Institutions through exciting test-and-learn pilots.



Figure 1 Participants from Thomasson Memorial School for the Deaf at the start of day two of their Bronze Expedition near Rivington Pike, Lancashire, July 2023.

This is a briefing paper summarised from a more detailed report.

The DofE offers its thanks to DCMS for their generous support, which has made it possible to increase access to the Award and support delivery in existing organisations. With your support the DofE has been able to provide young people life-changing opportunities across England.