



offa

office for fair access

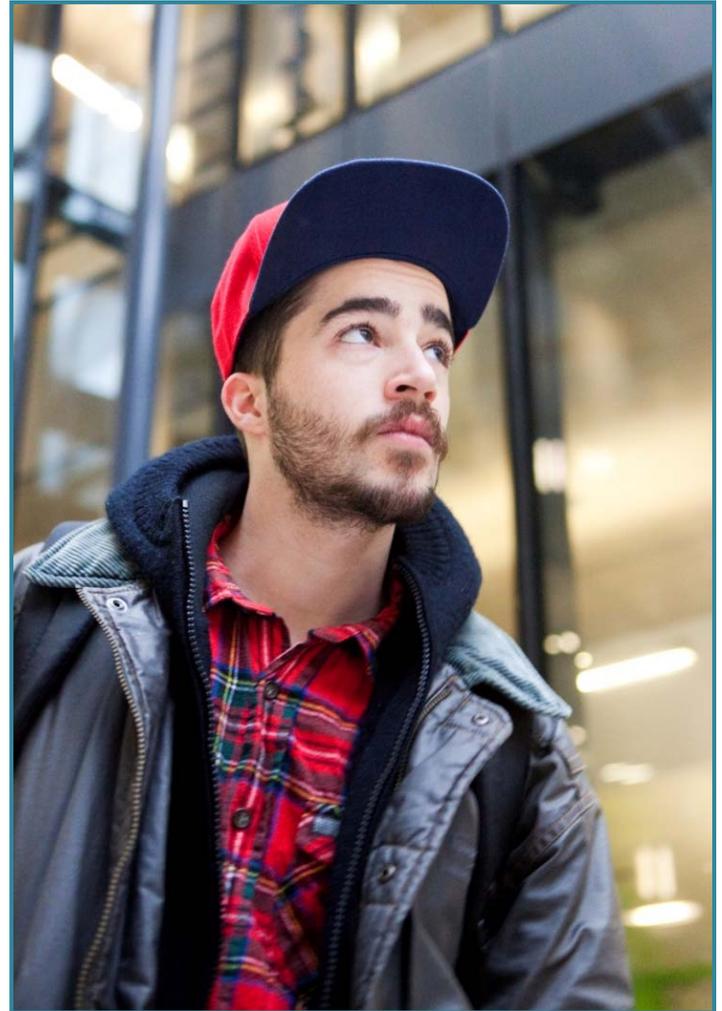
Professor Les Ebdon CBE

**Director of Fair Access to Higher
Education**

About OFFA

Our role:

To promote and safeguard fair access to higher education for lower income and other under-represented groups following the introduction of higher tuition fees



'OFFA-countable groups'

OFFA's remit is to safeguard access to education for under-represented groups. These are:

- people from lower-income backgrounds
- lower socio-economic groups
- students from neighbourhoods in which relatively few people enter higher education
- some ethnic groups or sub-groups
- people who have been in care
- disabled people.

How access agreements work

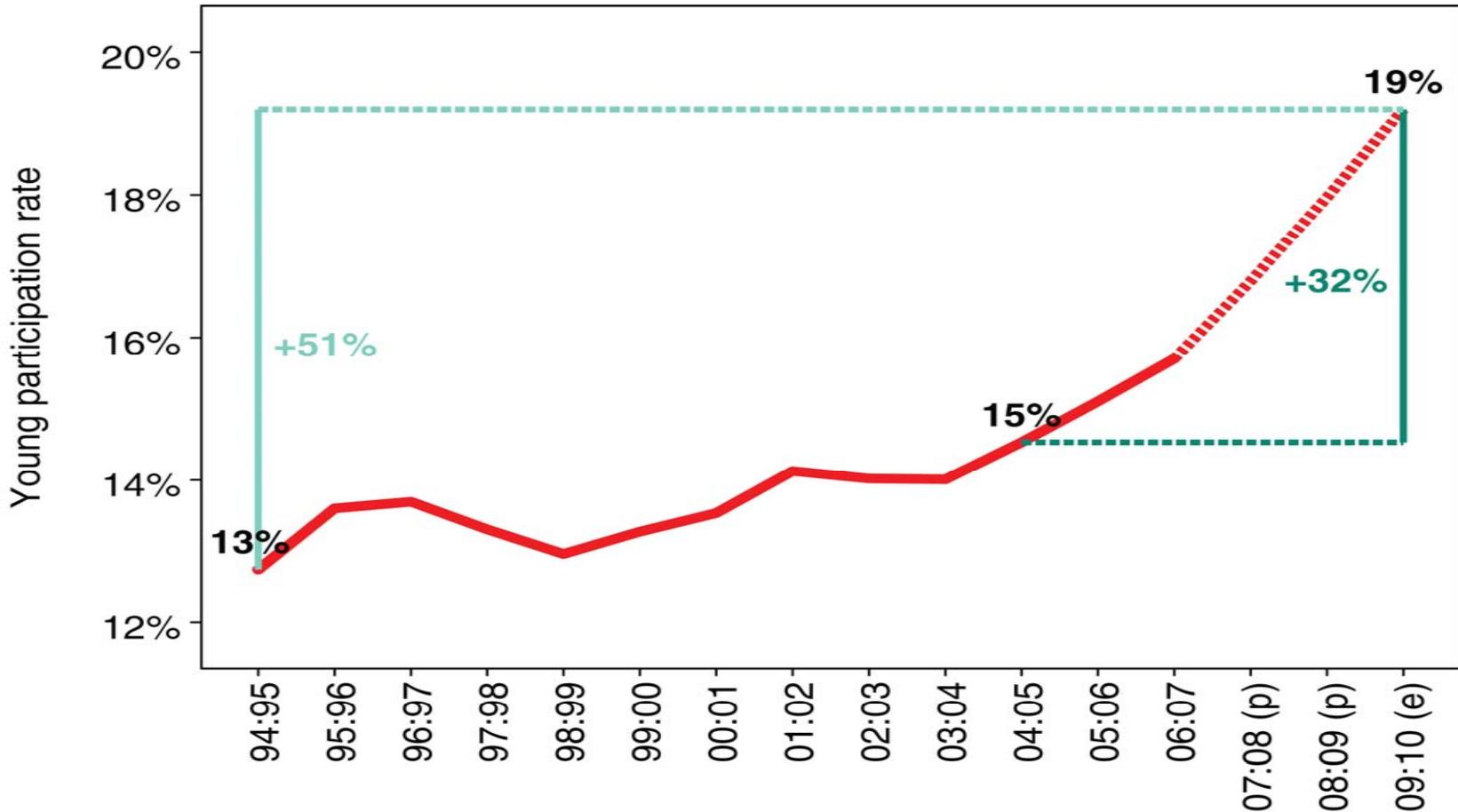
- All English universities and colleges that want to charge higher fees must have an access agreement with us.
- Access agreement is subject to OFFA approval.
- Sets out how institution will ensure that students from under-represented groups are not discouraged from applying.
- Includes financial support, outreach and retention measures.
- Monitored annually through joint monitoring process with HEFCE.

Progress

The sector as a whole has succeeded in widening participation since the mid-2000s.



Trends in young participation for the most disadvantaged areas determined by HE participation rates (POLAR2 classification)



Source: HEFCE publication 2010/03, *Trends in young participation in higher education: core results for England*, Figure 3

Access to the most selective universities

The most advantaged 20 per cent of young people are seven times more likely to enter the most selective institutions than the most disadvantaged 40 per cent.

In the least selective third of institutions, young people from all backgrounds now have broadly equal participation rates.

Source: OFFA publication 2010/03 *What more can be done to widen access to highly selective universities?*



2012 onwards: unknown territory?

- Considerable diversity in fee levels and financial support.
- What works?
- 2006 changes did not deter people from going to university; will this be true for 2012 onwards?
- Financial support available under the new system (including institutional financial support) must be communicated strongly, accurately and effectively.

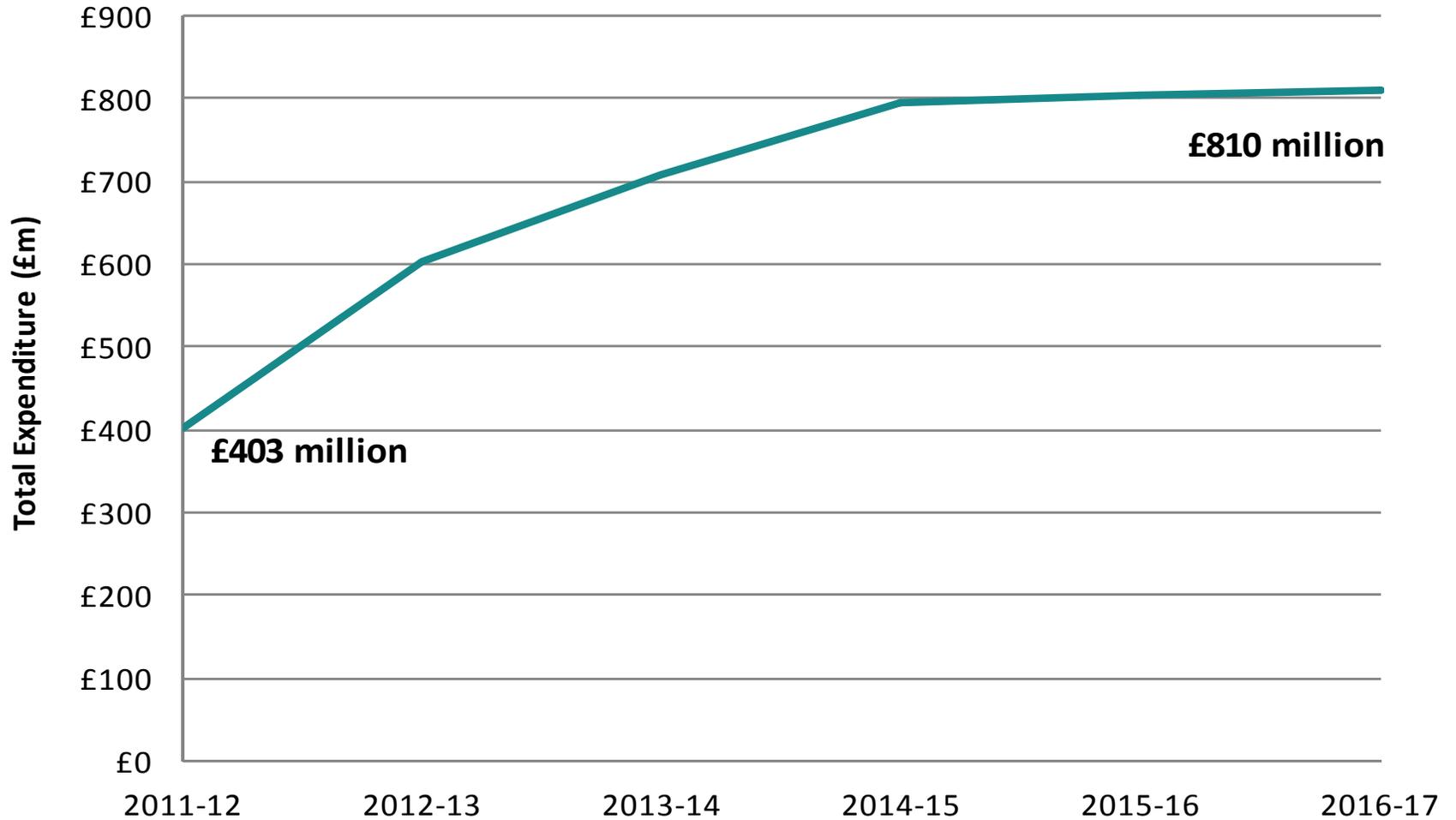
Multiple factors and shifting landscape

- Many factors influence participation (many/most not under control of the higher education sector)
- Measuring outcomes and comparing performance are complex
- Significantly changing environment adds to complexity
- Headline performance against targets doesn't tell full story
- need context
- Shared responsibility

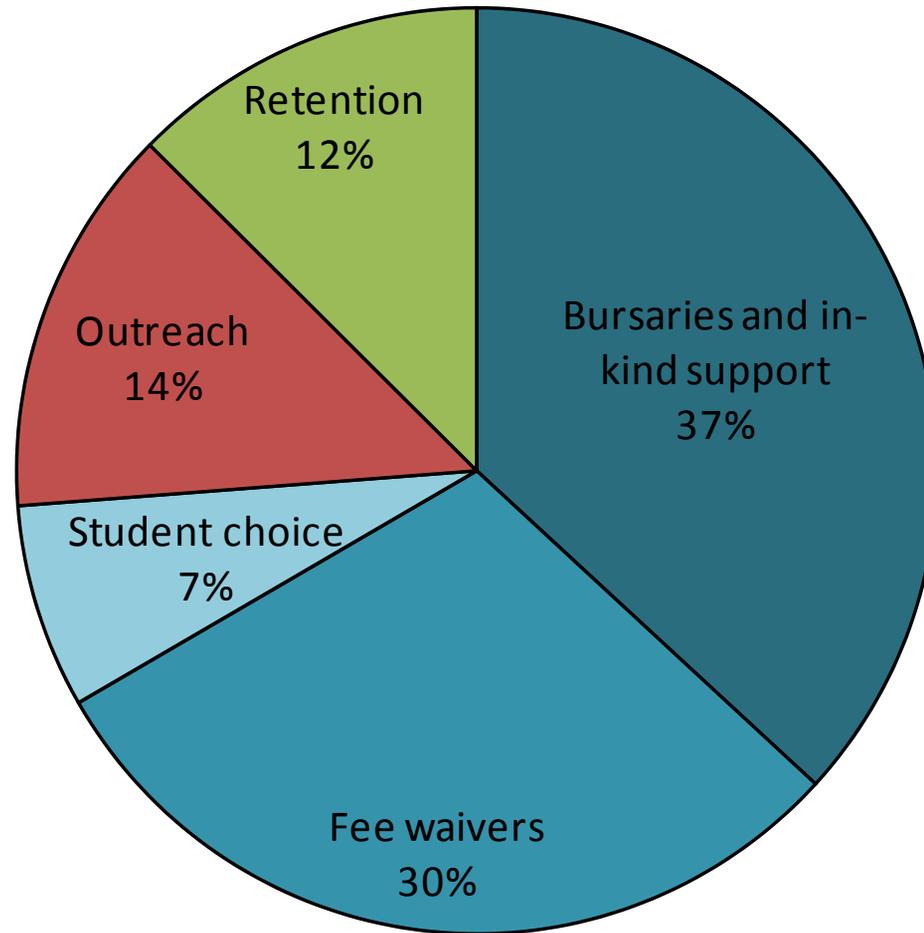
OFFA's changing focus

- Greater challenge
- Greater support
- Joint strategy with HEFCE
- Emphasis on outcomes (access and retention/student success)
- Evaluation
- **Outreach**
- Student involvement
- Equality and diversity

Estimated access agreement expenditure (including Government NSP allocation) 2011-12 to 2016-17: HEIs and FECs

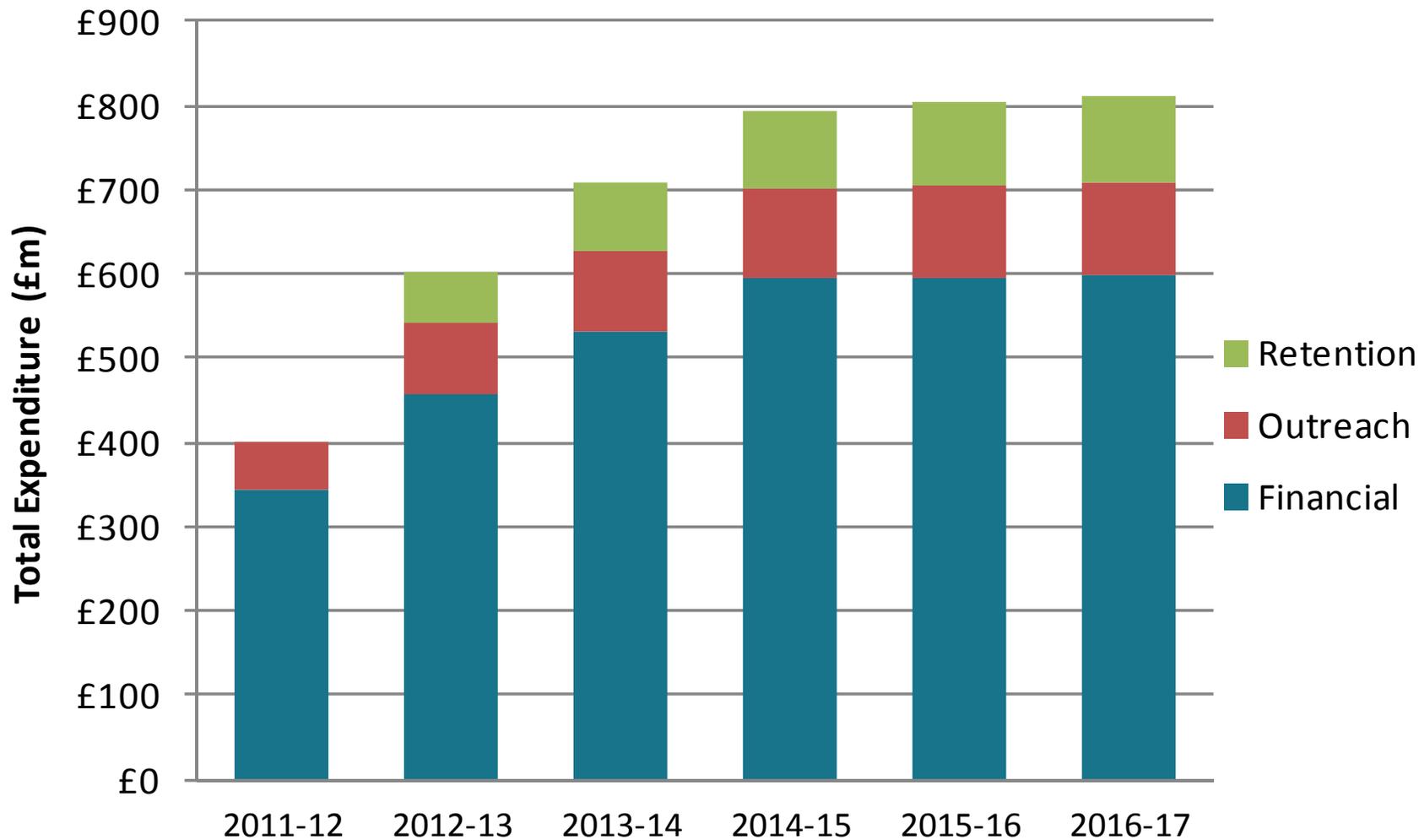


Estimated access agreement expenditure (including Government NSP allocation) by 2016-17: by type of spend, HEIs and FECs

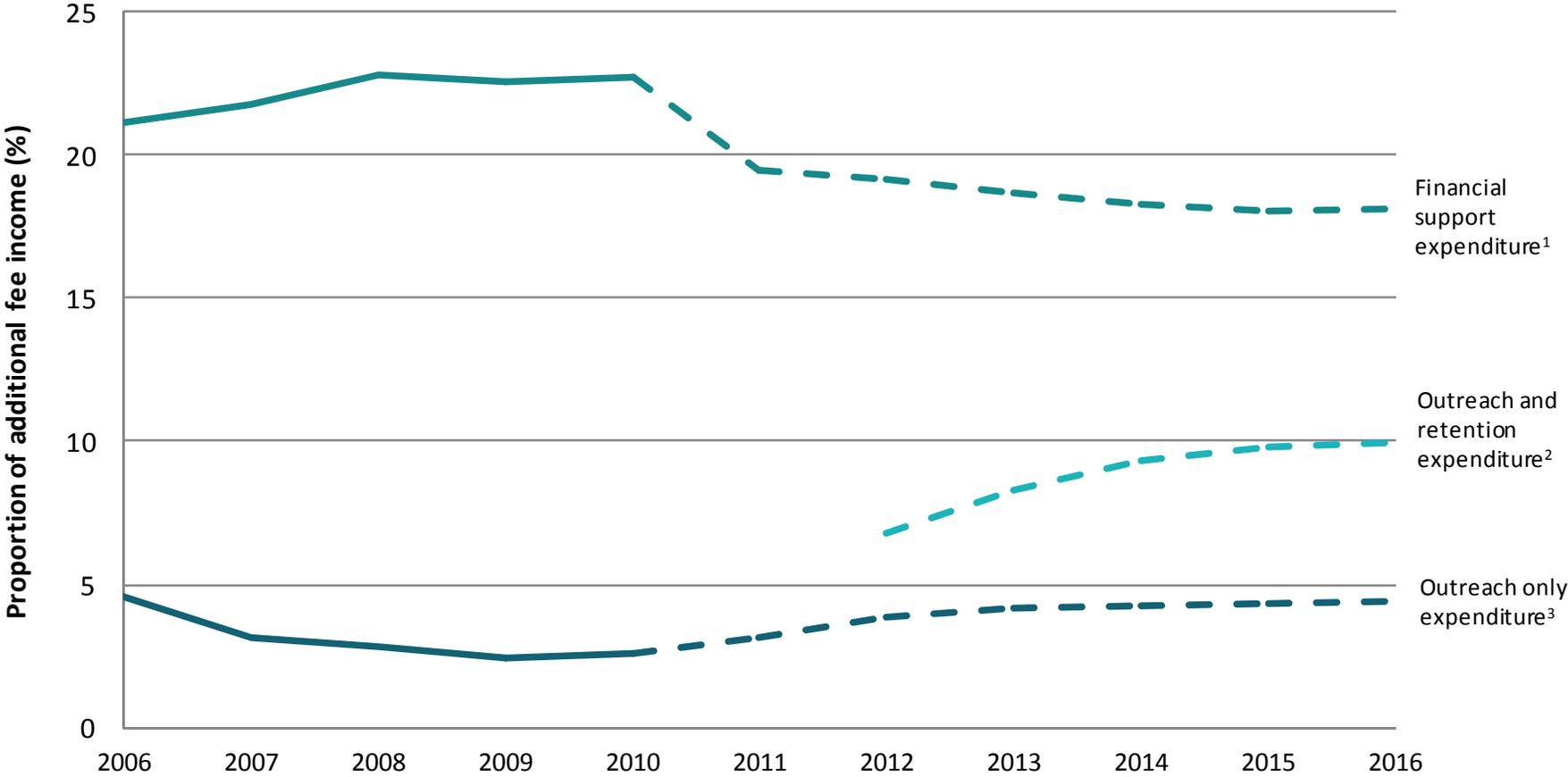


Total: £809.5 million

Estimated access agreement expenditure including Government NSP allocation 2011-12 to 2016-17: HEIs and FECs



Expenditure on OFFA-countable financial support, outreach and retention as a proportion of fee income above the basic amount* : HEIs only



* Actual (solid line 2006-07 to 2010-11) and projected (dashed line 2011-12 to 2016-17)

¹Financial support expenditure' includes access agreement spend on bursaries, fee waivers and other institutional discounts

²'Outreach and retention expenditure' includes access agreement spend on outreach plus additional expenditure on retention and employability which was introduced in access agreements for 2012-13

³Outreach only expenditure' includes access agreement spend committed to outreach activities



“All universities should work with schools to ensure that outreach programmes are provided from primary school level onwards.”

University challenge: How higher education can advance social mobility,
Alan Milburn, Independent Reviewer on Social Mobility and Child Poverty,
October 2012

Outreach

- Raises aspirations – higher education is for ‘people like me’
- Includes accurate info on finance and subject choices
- Starts early – before key decisions are made
- Keeps going



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Shared responsibility

- Universities
- Colleges
- Schools/teachers
- Parents
- Employers

...and collaboration between institutions.

Access agreement guidance

- Concentrate on outreach with a proven success record.
- We also welcome efforts to try new approaches, provided that you build in effective evaluation and monitoring from the start.
- Share good practice wherever you find new evidence of this, using your regional and national networks.
- Expenditure on evaluation is countable against agreement.
- We welcome/expect collaboration.



Evaluation

Increasingly important to access agreement approval and monitoring because:

- provides context
- demonstrates effort and illustrates performance of access measures
- (where successful) demonstrates progress underneath headline targets
- informs decisions on where to invest resources.



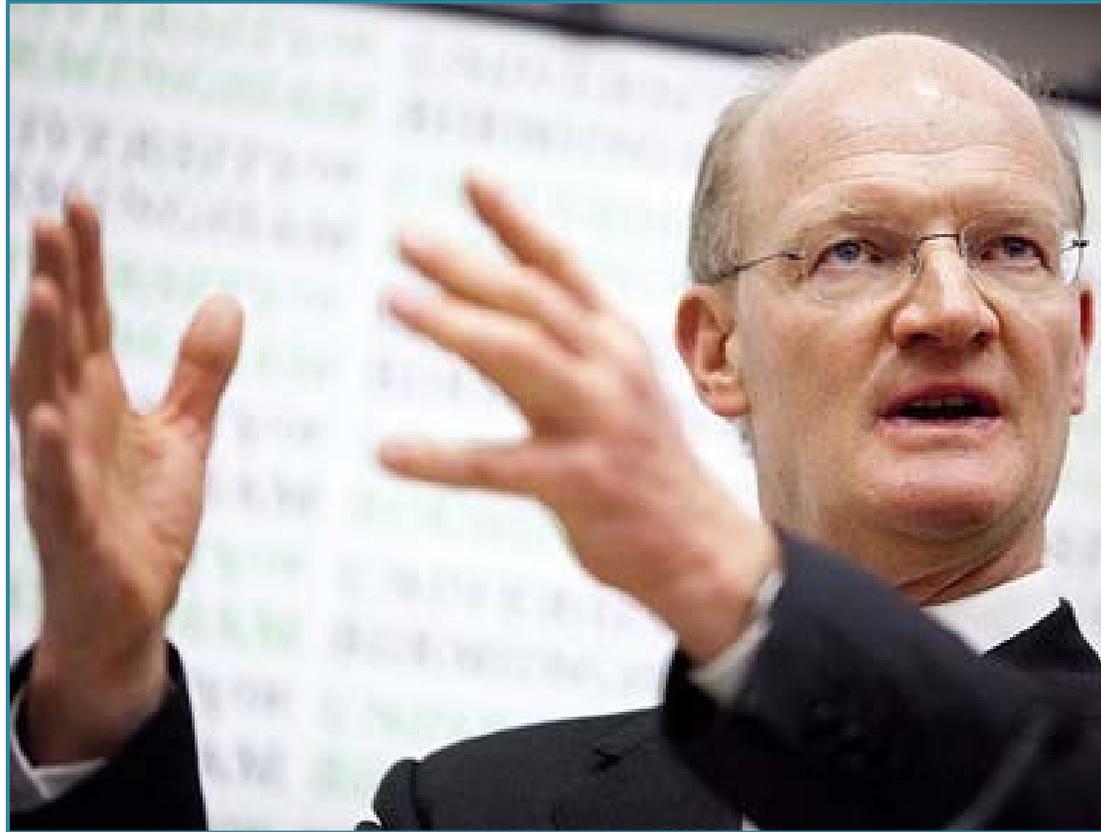
Evidence-based policy

- Sum of central and institutional evidence.
- Working with the sector to improve the evidence base.
- Institutional diversity and autonomy.
- Current evidence leads us to seek to increase investment in outreach activity and infrastructure .
- Risk of increase in resources for financial support reduces resources for outreach and retention activity.



“I hope, over time, OFFA will have more and more evidence about what works and what does not, and can draw on that evidence when advising universities.”

Rt Hon David Willetts MP, Minister for Universities and Science, Select Committee evidence, June 2012



“The whole point of this work and this investment is to identify and realise human potential.”

Rt Hon David Willetts MP, Minister for Universities and Science,
HEFCE 2012 annual conference