Converge

Socio-Economic Impact Assessment

Report

August 2023

Executive Summary

Executive Summary – The Converge Project

Converge is an innovative project providing a range of free primarily arts-based courses to adults (referred to as 'Converge Students' or 'participants') who have experienced mental health issues and/or received support for these, helping them to develop skills in a supportive educational environment.

About Converge

- Delivered by York St John University (YSJ University) in partnership with the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys (TEWV) NHS Foundation Trust

- Principal aim to open up university provision to participants in order to facilitate change through learning, education and collaboration

- Majority of courses take place at York St John University, with a smaller proportion offered online

- Courses taught by staff and students, including those with their own experience of mental ill health

- In addition to its direct participants, Converge is supported by existing York St John students ('Student Volunteers') volunteering within it

- The Discovery Hub, based at YSJ University, incorporates health professionals funded by the TEWV NHS Foundation Trust and provides additional support to Converge Students

Headlines (2022/23)

- Total delivery cost: **£0.49m**

- Number of Converge students enrolled: **265**

- Course completion rate: **82%**

- Number of student volunteers: **65**

- Estimated value of benefits: **£5.8m**

- Estimated Benefit Cost Ratio: **11.8**

- Value for money category: **Very High**

Executive Summary – Socio-Economic Impact Assessment

Following a detailed and primarily qualitative evaluation of Converge completed in 2022, the University identified the need to further **understand the quantitative impact of Converge** – and therefore commissioned a socio-economic impact assessment. This was undertaken during summer 2023.

Socio-Economic Assessment – Key Components

- **Quantitative assessment**, designed to complement recent qualitative evaluation
- Focus on impact of **2022/23 academic year** (costs and benefits)
- Key beneficiary groups: **Converge Students** and **Student Volunteers** (plus UK economy / society)
- Quantification of project **inputs** (expenditure), **outputs** and **outcomes** (benefits)
- **Document review and consultation** used to identify outcome / benefit categories
- Primary outcome categories relate to: **Mental health**; **Social wellbeing**; and **Economic / productivity**
- **Majority of impacts are to individuals and society**, others are to the UK economy at large
- **Varied data sources used to quantify outputs and outcomes**, including direct data from YSJ University, primary survey of Converge Students, findings from the 2022 evaluation, and individual consultation
- **Outcomes monetised** where relevant and appropriate
- **HM Treasury (HMT) Green Book-compliant sources used** for monetisation (HACT Social Value Bank and GMCA Unit Cost Database)
- **Prudent approach taken** when estimating and monetising net outcomes, based on HMT Green Book guidance

Executive Summary – Converge Inputs and Outputs (2022/23)

The full cost of delivering Converge in 2022/23 (including in-kind contributions) was £489k. This enabled 53 courses to be delivered, 265 Converge Students to participate and 65 Student Volunteers to engage.

£489k total delivery costs

£204k direct costs to YSJ*
£115k in-kind contribution from YSJ (e.g. room hire)
£144k NHS funding
£25k to deliver Out of Character Theatre
YSJ raised £194k income towards this from various sources

265 students enrolled

119 enrolled across both terms
146 enrolled in either spring or autumn term
218 course completers (82% completion rate)

53 courses delivered*

Across 2 terms
37 courses on campus, 16 online
Core subject areas: Theatre and Performance, Visual Arts, and Social Science and Study Skills
Includes repetition across both terms

65 student volunteers

Supporting delivery via various means including in-course support, workshop facilitation and tutoring

9 FTE jobs directly supported

Includes FTEs within the Discovery Hub

£1,800 per enrolled student

Executive Summary – Quantitative Converge Outcomes (2022/23)

Through delivery of Converge's outputs, a series of different outcomes/benefits were achieved during 2022/23

Mental health outcomes / benefits	Social wellbeing outcomes / benefits	Economic and productivity outcomes / benefits
Converge Students and Student Volunteers accrued mental health-related benefits from engagement in the project, which were quantified primarily through student surveys based on guidance from HACT and GMCA. Key outcomes here included **171 individuals identifying improved mental health** through their involvement in Converge, and **118 participants stating their usage of mental health services had reduced.**	Converge Students and Student Volunteers achieved a variety of social wellbeing benefits from their engagement. These benefits were quantified through a combination of student surveys, findings from the 2022 Converge evaluation, and data provided directly by YSJ University. Examples of outcomes included **179 individuals referencing increased confidence levels**, **143 undertaking volunteering** and **17 obtaining part-time employment** at YSJ University.	Economic and productivity benefits were accrued by Converge Students as a result of engaging in the project. These were quantified primarily by accessing direct data from YSJ University in line with GMCA guidance. Key outcomes included **218 individuals completing educational courses** and **3 progressing to further/higher-level courses at YSJ University.**

Note: different levels of benefit were applied to several of these outcomes based on survey responses/data
Note: responses to student surveys were extrapolated against 75% of the participant/volunteer population size

Executive Summary – Qualitative Converge Outcomes

Further to the quantifiable outcomes of Converge, a wide range of qualitative and strategic outcomes were also generated by the project.

Supports a **community-based model** of mental health support services

Strategic alignment with York's Community Mental Health Transformation programme

Improved **collaboration** between healthcare & (higher) education

Opens up the University to a wider range of individuals

Two-way knowledge exchange between university students & participants

Encourages **re-engagement with education and learning**, including beyond Converge itself

Enables participants to **re-discover past interests or develop new ones**

Develops new skills and knowledge for Converge Students

Direct benefits to volunteers through skills, learning & professional experience

A platform to progression for Converge Students & Volunteers

An outlet for participants to **express themselves** through creativity and to enable **'self-help'**

Increases the confidence of Converge Students & Volunteers

Builds a **shared understanding & acceptance** of mental health

**Positively impacts the wellbeing** of participants & volunteers

Reduces the need to access 'traditional' mental health support services for some people

Executive Summary – Converge Monetised Impact (2022/23)

Based on a prudent approach to monetising the project's outcomes, the total net benefit for 2022/23 is estimated as £5.8m. Using the overall cost of £0.49m, this means that for every £1 spent £12 benefit was generated. It is important to recognise that only a small proportion of these benefits are 'cash-releasing'.

£5.8m total net benefit
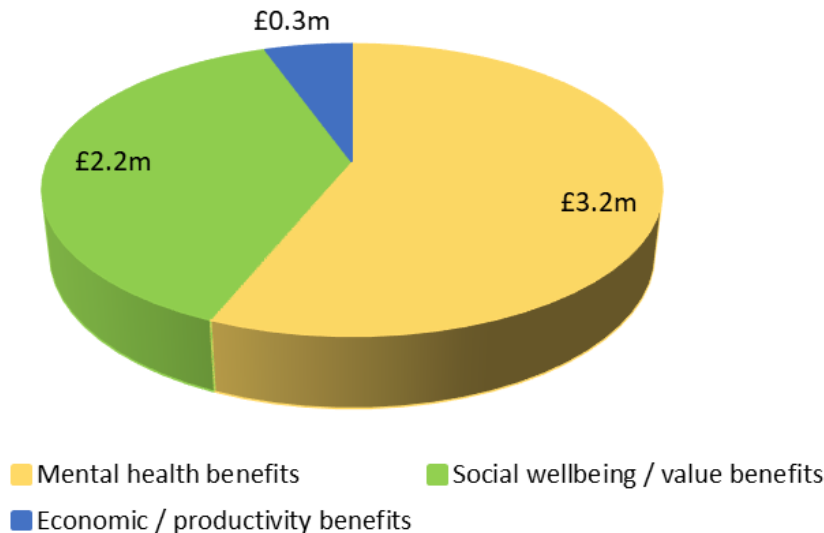
Although not included in this analysis, some benefits will 'persist' for a period of 5-10 years (e.g. improved economic productivity). In contrast, social wellbeing benefits are 'one-off' and may ultimately accrue over a longer time period.

£0.3m

£2.2m

£3.2m

- Mental health benefits
- Social wellbeing / value benefits
- Economic / productivity benefits

NPSV £5.29m — The Net Present Social Value (NPSV) represents total benefits minus total costs

BCR 11.8 — The Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) is the relationship between the relative costs and benefits

The largest proportion (56%) of benefits related to improved mental health, although there will be some crossover between the main three categories of benefit.

The estimated BCR of 11.8 is classed as providing 'very high' value for money – this is partly linked to Converge's relatively low (revenue only) costs alongside wide-ranging benefits.

Note: outcomes were only monetised where robust evidence was available, with double counting avoided based on HMT Green Book guidance

Executive Summary – Sensitivity Testing

To further assess the robustness of the findings, high-level sensitivity testing was applied for nine different 'negative' and 'positive' scenarios. This showed that, even when increasing costs by 50% or reducing Converge Student numbers by 50%, the BCR remained high.
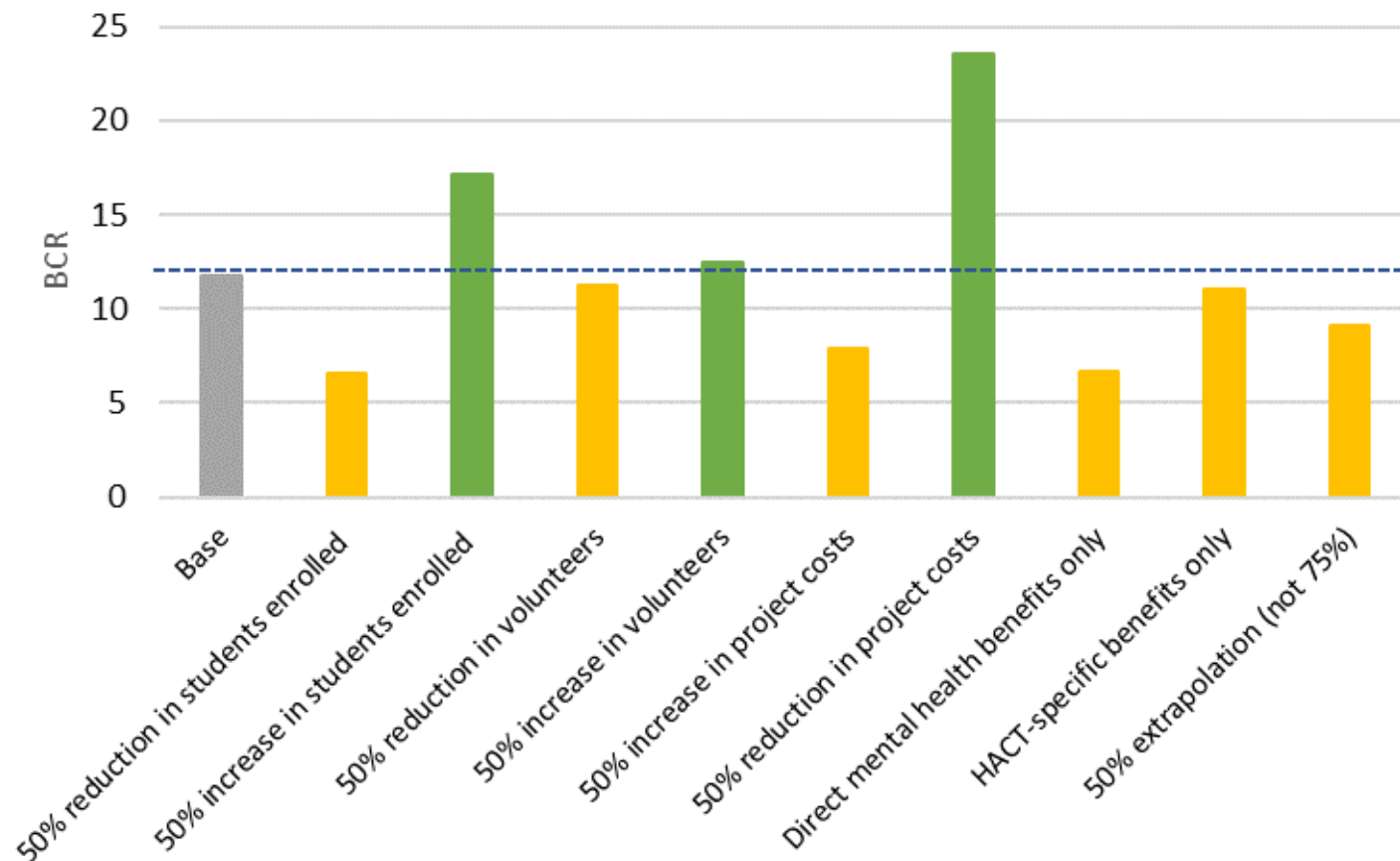
The chart demonstrates that reducing the number of Converge Student numbers by 50% had the greatest negative effect on the BCR, although it still remained positive at £6.60 for every £1 spent.

1. Introduction

1. Introduction – about Converge

This document details the findings of a socio-economic impact assessment of Converge, an innovative project led by York St John University and delivered in partnership with the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust

About Converge

Led by York St John University (YSJ University), Converge is an innovative project delivered in partnership with the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys (TEWV) NHS Foundation Trust.

Converge provides a range of free primarily arts-based courses to adults who have experienced mental health issues and/or received support for these, helping them to develop skills in a supportive educational environment. These individual participants are referred to as **Converge Students** (or 'participants').

Most courses take place at York St John University and are taught by staff, students and people with specific expertise - including their own experience of mental ill health. In addition to the university-based courses, a smaller proportion are also offered online and by post.

Each individual course typically runs for a term, with Converge delivered across the University's main two terms each academic year. Many participants attend more than one course per year.

The principal aim of Converge is to open up university provision to participants in order to facilitate change through learning, education and collaboration. It therefore has the potential to provide significant and varied benefits to a range of individuals and to society more broadly.

Converge was initially developed in 2008, and has subsequently been adopted by partners including Northumbria University and Pacific University (Oregon).

1. Introduction – about Converge

In addition to its direct participants, Converge also incorporates a series of other individuals and organisations, most notably existing York St John University students who volunteer in the project (referred to as **Student Volunteers**). The three main ways students volunteer are:

- As a student participant: fully participating in activities, supporting Converge Students to engage fully and supporting the tutor
- As a co-facilitator: volunteers use the skills they are learning within their undergraduate or postgraduate degree to co-facilitate one of the courses, often alongside a tutor initially
- As a workshop facilitator: taking charge of running and/or planning sessions

In addition, many Converge Students progress to become volunteers themselves within the project.

Converge also works with a range of **partner organisations**, primarily to offer wider opportunities to people experiencing mental ill health. Examples include the Out of Character Theatre Company (which forms a core component of Converge), Emerging Voices Music Charity, and supported volunteering in horticulture at St Nicholas Fields and Poppleton Community Railway Nursery.

Converge Students not only receive in-class support from Student Volunteers, but also benefit from **The Discovery Hub.** The Hub, hosted by Converge, incorporates a team of health professionals (Learning and Access Workers) who support people that have experienced mental health illness to access learning opportunities - including within Converge. The Hub is a partnership project between TEWV NHS Foundation Trust and YSJ University – and is funded by the NHS Trust.

The **Converge Evaluation and Research Team (CERT)**, consisting of people with lived experience of mental health challenges, offers bespoke evaluations of mental health services and community projects.

1. Introduction - background to the socio-economic assessment

The socio-economic assessment was commissioned to provide an overview of Converge's quantitative impact, building upon the primarily qualitative evaluation undertaken by York St John University between 2020 and 2022

Socio-economic impact assessment

A detailed and primarily qualitative evaluation of Converge was undertaken by York St John University during the period 2020-22. This highlighted a wide range of benefits created by the project, referencing it as a proven model for education and healthcare to work together.

Following this evaluation, the University identified the need to further understand the **quantitative impact** of Converge – and hence commissioned the socio-economic impact assessment. The assessment was therefore designed to complement the qualitative evaluation, and should ideally be read in conjunction with it.

Aims of the assessment

The assessment sought to estimate **the annual impact of Converge** for its latest year of delivery (2022/23). Its core aims can be summarised as follows:

- Identify the core **inputs** (expenditure) required to deliver Converge

- Detail the specific **outputs** resulting from the delivery of Converge, for example the number of Converge Students, courses and Student Volunteers

- Identify, and quantify, the **outcomes/benefits** resulting from the delivery of Converge's outputs, for example across themes such as health, social wellbeing and the economy

- Where possible, **monetise the outcomes/benefits** generated by Converge to calculate its estimated annual net benefit

- Using the expenditure and net benefit data, estimate the annual **value for money** provided by Converge (in terms of its Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) and Net Present Social Value (NPSV))

2. Assessment Methodology
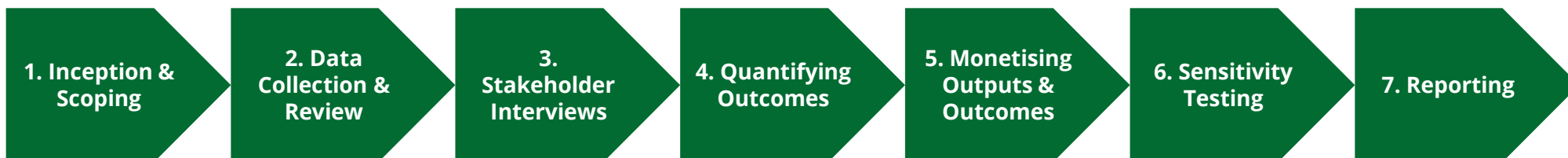
2. Assessment methodology

The assessment methodology utilised a logic model approach, therefore considering the project's inputs, outputs and outcomes (benefits). HM Treasury (HMT) Green Book guidance was subsequently used to monetise outcomes where appropriate, a process which included recognition of attribution levels. Further details are provided in Appendix I.

The methodology for the socio-economic impact assessment focused upon identifying, quantifying and (where relevant) monetising the outcomes/benefits emanating from Converge. It incorporated the following key steps:

- Identifying and quantifying Converge's core **inputs** (expenditure/resources) and **outputs** (delivery and participation)
- Quantifying, based on existing available data and primary research, the **gross outcomes/benefits** generated by Converge
- Where possible and appropriate, **monetising** the gross outcomes/benefits created by Converge – based on HMT Green Book guidance
- Undertaking **gross to net calculations** for each monetised outcome by considering and applying the project's additionality (therefore accounting for deadweight/attribution)
- Reviewing Converge's **Value for Money** (in quantitative terms) by estimating its Net Present Social Value (NPSV) and Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) - based on its costs and benefits

Key stages within the methodology are outlined below:

Figure 2.1: Methodology stages

1. Inception & Scoping → 2. Data Collection & Review → 3. Stakeholder Interviews → 4. Quantifying Outcomes → 5. Monetising Outputs & Outcomes → 6. Sensitivity Testing → 7. Reporting

2. Assessment methodology

Data and information sources

The following sources were used to identify and quantify Converge's inputs, outputs and outcomes:

- Detailed **review of wide-ranging Converge documentation**, including the 2020-2022 evaluation and previous feedback from Converge Students and Student Volunteers

- Detailed **discussions with project representatives**, including the Project Director, Co-Ordinator and the CERT Co-ordinator

- An **online survey distributed to all 2022/23 Converge Students**

- **Review of wide-ranging project data**

- **One-to-one discussions with key individuals** including:
  - Converge Students
  - Student Volunteers
  - Discovery Hub Learning and Access Workers
  - Representative of TEWV NHS Trust
  - Representative of York City Council

Consideration of outputs and outcomes

Having identified a list of potential outputs and outcomes/benefits resulting from Converge, further consideration included:

- To what extent was each output and outcome/benefit **realistically attributable** to the project's support?

- What **level of data availability** was there regarding each output and outcome/benefit?

- What **level of robustness** was associated with the available data?

- Where data was unavailable, to what extent could this be obtained through **primary research** (Converge Student survey)?

- Where data was not available and could not be captured via primary research, **how realistic would it be** to make assumptions based on available evidence, feedback and wider studies/research?

These considerations ultimately led to some outcomes/benefits not being included within the assessment, whilst others were assessed in numerical terms but were not subsequently monetised.

2. Assessment methodology

Further characteristics of assessment methodology

Whilst full details of the methodology are provided in Appendix I, the following is noteworthy:

- The work focused on a **single-year impact assessment** (2022/23) and only the work delivered through YSJ University's Converge provision (i.e. not Converge courses delivered at other institutions such as Northumbria University)

- The two primary beneficiaries considered within the assessment were **Converge Students** and **Student Volunteers** – as well as accompanying benefits to wider society and the overall UK economy

- A **cautious and prudent approach** was taken throughout in line with the HMT Green Book-compliant guidance, for example:
  - avoiding double counting benefits
  - reducing or not including the monetised value of benefits where robustness levels were lower and assumptions greater
  - extrapolating survey findings against only 75% (rather than 100%) of the overall participant/volunteer population
  - increasing deadweight ratios (reducing additionality) where attribution was deemed lower

- The two primary sources for monetising the benefits were the HMT Green Book-compliant **Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT) Social Value Bank** and the **Greater Manchester Combined Authority's (GMCA) Unit Cost Database**

- **Gross to net calculations** (to account for deadweight/attribution) were based on specific guidance from relevant sources including HACT and the Homes England Additionality Guide

3. Expenditure

3. Expenditure – 2022/23 academic year

The total cost of delivering Converge in 2022/23 was £489k, including costs to all contributing organisations (and in-kind contributions from the University)

Data from YSJ University enabled total expenditure for Converge to be calculated for 2022/23, as shown below. This primarily contributed towards funding staff to deliver the courses and other aspects of the project.

Figure 3.1: Converge expenditure (2022/23 academic year)

Cost	£
Direct cost to York St John University (staff, materials etc.)	£204,000
Cost to NHS for delivering the Discovery Hub	£144,000
Cost of operating the Out of Character Theatre Company*	£25,000
Additional in-kind contribution towards delivering Converge (room hire, office space, 0.7 FTE Converge Director salary)**	£115,000
Total cost of delivering Converge including all organisations (and in-kind expenditure)	**£489,000**

* an independent charity but a key component of Converge
** not accounted for as a Converge cost item by YSJ University
Note: errors due to rounding

The table shows that, **for 2022/23, the total cost of delivering Converge was £489k.** These costs included direct costs funded by the University, costs to the NHS for delivering the Discovery Hub, and the cost of operating the Out of Character Theatre Company. It also included in-kind contributions from the University regarding the value of room hire and a proportion of the Converge Director's salary (which is not a direct Converge cost item) – these are essentially opportunity costs.

The £204k direct costs to the University in 2022/23 were supported by £194k income raised relating specifically to Converge. This included £97k from grant making trusts, £72k from the TEWV NHS Foundation Trust (additional to funding the Discovery Hub), £21k from CERT's activities and a further £4k from consultancy.

4. Outputs

4. Outputs – 2022/23 course provision

In 2022/23 there were 53 individual courses delivered by Converge across both terms, encompassing 28 subjects

Whilst the project includes many facets, the provision of educational courses represents the primary component of Converge. The range of courses delivered in 2022/23 is summarised below.

Total specific courses 2022/23 academic year (across both terms): 53*
Number of courses autumn term 2022: 24 (17 on campus / 7 via Converge Connected (online)
Number of courses spring term 2023: 29 (20 on campus / 9 via Converge Connected (online)

On campus courses
- Art: Drawing on Life
- Art Mixed Media
- Communitas Choir
- Composing to Moving Image
- Continuing Applied Music Theory for Singers
- Continuing Songwriting
- Creative Writing: The Art of Poetry
- Creative Writing: Developing Your Skills
- Creative Writing: Inspirations
- Exploring Spirituality
- Improv Comedy
- Introduction to Songwriting
- International Drumming
- Leaded Glass
- Music Composition
- Music Production
- Music Psychology
- Origami
- Piano improvisation
- Research Methods
- Working Towards Performance

Converge Connected (online) courses
- Creative Writing: Developing Your Skills
- Creative Writing: Inspirations
- Exploring Surrealism
- Introduction to Feminism
- Life Writing
- Philosophy
- Playback Theatre
- Sing Your Story
- Zoom to Stage

In addition to the courses, Converge also offered various other opportunities for its students, including supported horticultural volunteering sessions at Poppleton Community Railway and arts and crafts volunteering opportunities at the Poppleton Community Railway Nursery

* Includes courses duplicated across the two terms (most courses from the autumn term were repeated in the spring term or had a follow-on course)

4. Outputs – 2022/23 academic year

265 different individuals took part in Converge courses during the 2022/23 academic year

The table below shows direct outputs emanating from the delivery of Converge's courses in 2022/23.

Figure 4.1: Converge outputs (2022/23)

Output	2022/23
Total number of individual enrolled Converge Students	**265**
- Students enrolling in courses during both the autumn 2022 and spring 2023 term	*119*
- Students participating in either autumn 2022 or spring 2023	*146*
Completion rate (of those enrolled)	**82% (218)**
Total number of Student Volunteers within Converge	**65**
Number of full-time equivalent jobs supported directly by Converge*	**9**

Average cost per participant supported:

£1,800

* Includes FTEs funded through the Discovery Hub

The table shows that **265 individuals took part in Converge courses** during 2022/23, with an 82% completion rate. In addition, **65 YSJ University Students volunteered** within Converge. The project supported 9 FTE equivalent jobs during 2022/23.

5. Outcomes

5. Quantitative outcomes – outcome categories

A series of different outcomes were identified via a review of Converge documentation and interviews with project stakeholders, including a sample of Converge Students and Student Volunteers

Through delivery of Converge's outputs in 2022/23 a series of different outcomes/benefits were enabled, relating to Converge Students and Student Volunteers. The type and categorisation of outcomes/benefits included within the assessment were identified following a detailed review of project documentation (including the 2022 evaluation and previous participant/volunteer feedback), discussions with a series of project stakeholders and assessment of HMT guidance.

The different outcomes/benefits primarily fell within the following three broad themes or categories (note that several cut across more than one theme) - all these outcomes provide benefits to specific individuals (Converge Students and/or Student Volunteers) as well as wider society, whilst some also generate benefits to the overall UK economy.

Outcome/benefit category		
Mental Health	Social Wellbeing	Economic and Productivity

The table overleaf lists each individual outcome/benefit type from within the above categories and the primary source of evidence for estimating the number of outcomes achieved through Converge in 2022/23. Further details are provided in Appendix I.

Care was taken to avoid duplicating or double counting benefits - for example, the HACT Social Value Bank confirmed that the different social wellbeing outcome types overleaf could be used in conjunction with each other. Despite this, some outcome metrics were reduced to avoid any double counting – for example, the number of Converge Students undertaking post-Converge education were subtracted from the number of Converge Students achieving economic/productivity benefits as a result of completing Converge courses.

5. Quantitative outcomes – outcome types

Figure 5.1: Converge quantitative outcome types and associated primary evidence source

Outcome type	Beneficiary group	Primary evidence source
Mental health outcomes		
Improved mental health for Converge Students (benefit to the recipient)	Converge Students	Converge Student survey
Improved mental health for Student Volunteers (benefit to the recipient)	Student Volunteers	2022 Converge Evaluation / anecdotal evidence
Reduced usage of mental health services/provision (fiscal savings to the Exchequer and economic benefits to UK economy)	Converge Students	Converge Student survey
Social wellbeing outcomes		
Increased confidence for Converge Students (benefit to the recipient)	Converge Students	Converge Student survey
Increased confidence for Student Volunteers (benefit to the recipient)	Student Volunteers	2022 Converge Evaluation
Converge Students undertaking volunteering activity (benefit to the recipient)	Converge Students	Converge Student survey
Student Volunteers undertaking volunteering activity (benefit to the recipient)	Student Volunteers	Direct data from YSJ
Increased engagement in arts by Converge Students (benefit to the recipient)	Converge Students	Direct data from YSJ
Economic / productivity outcomes		
Completion of Converge education courses (benefit to UK economy)	Converge Students	Direct data from YSJ
Converge Students undertaking post-Converge education (benefit to UK economy)	Converge Students	Direct data from YSJ
Converge Students accessing employment post-Converge (benefit to the recipient / UK economy)	Converge Students	Direct data from YSJ
Student Volunteers accessing employment and/or education (benefit to UK economy)	Student Volunteers	Direct data from YSJ / anecdotal evidence

Note that, in addition to the primary evidence source, a range of other documentation and anecdotal sources were used to quality assure outcomes

5. Quantitative outcomes – totals (2022/23)

The table below shows the outcomes achieved for Converge in 2022/23 for each outcome type – these figures are based on the data/findings from the primary evidence sources outlined on the previous page.

Figure 5.2: Converge quantitative outcomes 2022/23

Outcome type	Total
Mental health outcomes	
Improved mental health for Converge Students	171*
Improved mental health for Student Volunteers	7**
Reduced usage of mental health services/provision	118*
Social wellbeing outcomes	
Increased confidence for Converge Students	179*
Increased confidence for Student Volunteers	45*
Converge Students undertaking volunteering activity	143*
Student Volunteers undertaking volunteering activity	65
Increased engagement in art activity by Converge Students	185
Economic / productivity outcomes	
Completion of Converge education courses	218
Converge Students undertaking post-Converge education	3**
Converge Students accessing employment post-Converge	17 (part-time)
Student Volunteers accessing employment and/or education	20

Includes different levels of benefit based on feedback from Converge Student survey (see Appendix I)
*** Conservative estimate based on lower level of robust evidence available*

The table shows particularly significant benefits related to improved mental health and improved confidence levels for Converge Students, as well as a reduction in the use of other mental health support services.

There are also significant social wellbeing benefits related to volunteering activity and increased engagement in the arts.

Economic and productivity benefits are less significant but are achieved by students completing their Converge courses as well as subsequently participating in additional education and employment.

5. Qualitative outcomes

Whilst the focus of this impact assessment is quantitative, a review of wide-ranging documentation and anecdotal evidence - supported by consultation with a sample of stakeholders, participants and volunteers – highlighted a range of qualitative outcomes emanating from Converge

Supports a **community-based model** of mental health support services

Strategic alignment with York's Community Mental Health Transformation programme

Improved **collaboration** between healthcare & (higher) education

Opens up the University to a wider range of individuals

Two-way knowledge exchange between university students & participants

Encourages **re-engagement with education and learning**, including beyond Converge

Enables participants to **re-discover past interests or develop new ones**

Develops new skills and knowledge for Converge Students

Direct benefits to volunteers through skills, learning & professional experience

A platform to progression for Converge Students & Volunteers

An outlet for participants to **express themselves** through creativity and to enable **'self-help'**

Increases the confidence of Converge Students & Volunteers

Builds a **shared understanding & acceptance** of mental health

Positively impacts the wellbeing (part. mental health) of participants & volunteers

Reduced need to access 'traditional' mental health support services for some people

5. Qualitative outcomes

The range of qualitative outcomes not only demonstrate additional non-quantifiable impacts resulting from Converge, but in many cases also provide further evidence to support the project's quantifiable outcomes/benefits

Further specific examples of qualitative outcomes are provided below.

Wide-ranging benefits to Converge Students

- Converge Students identified a variety of qualitative benefits received as a result of their engagement in Converge
- One example was an individual who had been undertaking talking therapies prior to joining Converge. Following their enjoyment and associated benefit from the first course they subsequently attended another 3 Converge courses
- The impacts from these courses were significant, including reigniting an interest in playing the piano, generating a completely new interest in acting and providing greater purpose
- Attending the courses also led to a significant increase in confidence, a new focus and method of expressing themself, and progression to additional non-Converge courses (including the Royal Academy of Dance, London)
- Most recently, the individual established their own business which incorporates delivering a storytelling walking tour

"I am incredibly grateful to Converge. It has led to a monumental change in my life, being the first stepping-stone to starting my own business. It gave me a major confidence boost and enabled me to turn my life around. What I really benefited from was the ability to express myself in a way I had not done for a while. This expression has really helped me to deal with my mental health challenges and is more effective for me than any other type of support." [Converge Student]

Direct benefits to volunteers aligned with future career paths

- Student Volunteers highlighted how engagement in Converge provided them with a range of benefits in terms of wellbeing, education and career development
- In addition to the wide range of often very significant volunteering roles provided, additional training was also given to volunteers – for example, 43 of the 65 Student Volunteers in 2022/23 were funded to attend mental health awareness training provided by the University
- One Student Volunteer explained how engagement in Converge had been very complimentary to their Occupational Therapy degree whilst also supporting their ambition to work within a mental health setting
- Another volunteer explained how their involvement had influenced them to pursue a career focused on community-based practice working with adults

"My volunteering role at Converge definitely influenced the career I want to pursue. It further opened my eyes to the benefits of community-based practice supporting adults with mental health issues." [Student Volunteer]

- One Student Volunteer explained how they had ultimately obtained direct employment within Converge, which they commented would ultimately support their career development

5. Qualitative outcomes

Additional details and examples of qualitative outcomes are provided below.

Improving collaboration between the University and the NHS

- Converge provides evidence of the value generated through joint working between the NHS and the University
- Specifically, this is facilitated by the increasing adoption of community-based mental health support services, not only via the courses and volunteering opportunities within Converge, but also through the support of the Discovery Hub's specialist Learning and Access Workers
- As evidenced by Converge Students, this has the potential to provide alternative support to people facing mental health challenges, for example by enabling individuals to develop a new focus and to express themselves within a safe environment

Strategic alignment with York's Community Mental Health Transformation Programme (Connecting our City)

- Strategic stakeholders outlined how Converge is aligned with, and a key contributor to, York's Community Mental Health Transformation Programme
- This is enabled by the community-based approach of Converge, not only providing alternative solutions for some individuals but also being a referral pathway for health professionals
- Converge also supports the programme's increasing focus on individuals as active citizens rather than service users, helping people to be generators of their own health and wellbeing outcomes

Development of a Converge community

- A range of stakeholders, including Converge Students and Student Volunteers, remarked on the benefits arising from the community which is created through Converge
- This includes a range of Converge Students from varied backgrounds engaging with and working alongside current YSJ University students, as well as a mixture of different tutors, Learning and Access Workers and other individuals
- Benefits arising from this were varied but included increased confidence and wellbeing, two-way knowledge exchange, and an increasing desire to pursue specific learning or career development
- Perhaps most importantly, the community approach helped new Converge participants to feel increasingly comfortable within a learning environment, at the same time providing an alternative 'route in' to the University

"I really enjoyed being at the YSJ Creative Centre. It was a nice, safe space with creative energy. Building relationships with other students and volunteers really helped build my confidence and self-esteem. Having the University's name attached to Converge also gives it greater credibility." [Converge Student]

6. Monetised outcomes

6. Monetised Outcomes – 2022/23

Where possible and appropriate, each outcome/benefit type was monetised based on the number of outcomes achieved – providing an overall estimate of Converge's net benefit in 2022/23

Principles used when monetising outcomes

Whilst the output and outcome metrics provide a valuable demonstration of the project's impact, these can also be monetised to calculate Converge's estimated net benefit for 2022/23.

Key principles followed when monetising the outcomes/benefits are summarised below (see Appendix I for more details):

- HMT Green Book-compliant sources were used to guide the appropriateness and method of monetising outcomes, specifically incorporating the following three sources:
  - HACT Social Value Bank
  - GMCA Unit Cost Database
  - DCMS guidance on Quantifying and Valuing the Wellbeing Impacts of Culture and Sport
- For each outcome type the guidance provides a monetised value (£) per individual outcome achieved
- These values were applied based on the outcomes/benefits shown in Figure 5.2, although some adjustments were made:
  - Economic benefits associated with the number of participants completing Converge courses were not monetised due to the relatively short duration of the courses (although many participants complete several different courses) and their lack of formal accreditation
  - Economic benefits associated with the number of Student Volunteers accessing employment and/or additional education as a result of engaging in Converge were not monetised due to relatively limited data robustness (despite strong anecdotal evidence) and difficulty confirming attribution
  - Dependent on specific data (including survey responses), reduced levels (e.g. 75% or 50%) of each benefit value were applied to some of the outcome numbers
  - In some cases, the outcomes from one outcome type were reduced to avoid duplicating another outcome type
- Additionality ratios were subsequently applied to all monetised outcomes/benefits to calculate 'net' benefits – primarily to account for deadweight (guidance from relevant sources including HACT and Homes England was used here)
- The number of FTE jobs (9) supported by Converge was not included in the monetised outcomes – given that these jobs are a direct result of Converge's expenditure and are required to achieve the project's outputs and outcomes

6. Monetised Outcomes – 2022/23

The estimated net benefit resulting from the delivery of Converge in 2022/23 was £5.8m

The figure below shows the estimated gross and net monetised outcomes/benefits resulting from the delivery of Converge in 2022/23, with the net benefit totalling £5.8m.

Figure 6.1: Converge gross and net monetised outcomes/benefits 2022/23

Outcome type	Gross monetised benefit (2022/23)	Net monetised benefit (2022/23)	Monetised source
Mental health outcomes			
Improved mental health for Converge Students	£4.230m	£3.088m	HACT
Improved mental health for Student Volunteers	£0.127m	£0.092m	HACT
Reduced use of mental health services (fiscal & economic)	£0.482m	£0.352m	GMCA
Social wellbeing outcomes			
Increased confidence for Converge Students	£1.945m	£1.420m	HACT
Increased confidence for Student Volunteers	£0.474m	£0.346m	HACT
Converge Students undertaking volunteering activity	£0.288m	£0.234m	HACT
Student Volunteers undertaking volunteering activity	£0.220m	£0.178m	HACT
Increased engagement in arts by Converge Students	£0.042m	£0.030m	DCMS
Economic / productivity outcomes			
Completion of Converge education courses	*Not monetised due to lack of formal accreditation*		
Converge Students undertaking post-Converge education	£0.008m	£0.006m	GMCA
Converge Students accessing employment post-Converge	£0.032m	£0.027m	HACT
Student Volunteers accessing employment / education	*Not monetised due to lack of robust evidence / attribution*		
Total benefit 2022/23	**£7.849m**	**£5.774m**	**N/R**

Note: Errors due to rounding

It is important to note that most benefits will fall to individuals and society in general, with some to the UK economy.

The only 'cash releasing' (fiscal) benefits are those from the reduced use of mental health services – these total £69k.

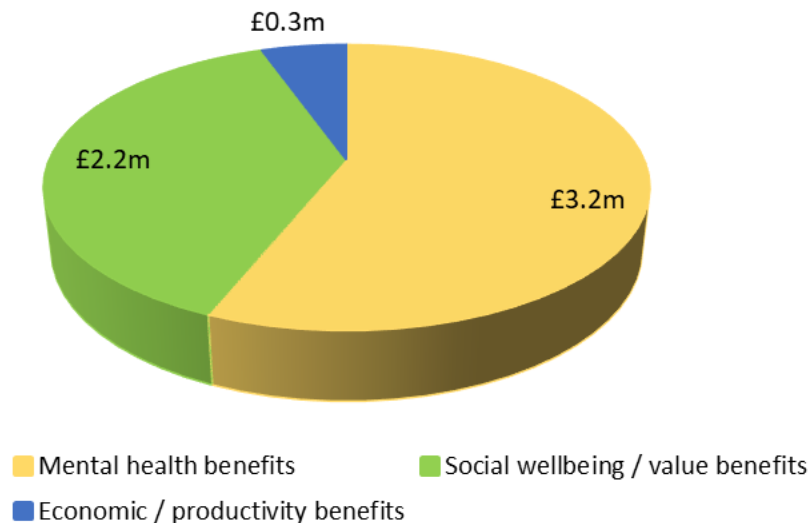Persistence effects are not included in the analysis.

6. Monetised Outcomes – by outcome category and recipient type

The greatest level of benefit generated from Converge related to mental health outcomes, totalling £3.2m

The overall benefits can also be split between the different categories of outcomes as shown below:

Figure 6.2: Net monetised outcomes/benefits by category

£0.3m
£2.2m
£3.2m

Mental health benefits
Social wellbeing / value benefits
Economic / productivity benefits

Converge's biggest impacts are mental health related, totaling £3.2m – these include benefits to individuals and society, fiscal savings to the UK Exchequer and benefits to the overall UK economy.

Social wellbeing benefits are also significant – these represent benefits to individuals (the value to their lives), their communities and wider services. Recognition of the importance of social value has increased considerably in recent years.

Whilst the project's economic/productivity benefits appear comparatively minimal, there is clear overlap here with several social wellbeing outcomes – for example volunteering and raised confidence.

The project's fiscal savings/cash-releasing benefits relate specifically to a reduction in the use of other mental health services/provision – these benefits are estimated at £69k for 2022/23. These savings, based on guidance within the GMCA Unit Cost Database, are likely to be borne by the NHS and local authorities. It should also be noted here that this benefit is likely to generate ongoing 'persistence effects' over a 5–10-year period. Over a 5-year period this can be estimated at £323k (using a discount rate of £3.5% in line with HMT guidance).

These persistence effects, together with those from other benefits (e.g. improved economic productivity from completing subsequent educational courses), are not included within the monetised figures due to the already high Benefit Cost Ratio (see Section 7). In contrast, social wellbeing benefits are 'one-off' and will not persist (some may take several years to fully accrue).

"I cannot thank Converge enough for how it has improved my mental health." **[Converge Student]**

7. Value for Money

7. Value for money

Based on the full cost (including in-kind contributions) of delivering Converge during 2022/23, together with the estimated net benefits (not including any persistence effects), the project has a Benefit Cost Ratio estimated at 11.8.

To quantitatively assess the value for money (VfM) of specific interventions such as Converge, a cost benefit analysis approach is undertaken. For the purposes of this impact assessment there are two key elements to this, as detailed below.

Net Present Social Value (NPSV)

The NPSV of an intervention is the present value of its benefits minus the present value of its costs. Given this assessment is focused on a single (and most recent) year, and does not incorporate any persistence effects for the project's benefits, all costs and benefits can be viewed as 'present' and have therefore not been discounted.

Based on the estimated benefits and the full costs of delivering Converge in 2022/23, the NPSV is **£5.3m.**

Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)

The BCR shows the relationship between the relative costs and benefits of an intervention, expressed in monetary terms.

Based on the estimated benefits and the full costs of delivering Converge in 2022/23, the BCR is **11.8.** This means that, for every £1 spent on the project, an estimated £12 benefit is generated.

Different guidance is available on what constitutes a 'good' BCR, however, the table overleaf shows specific government guidance.

Figure 7.1: BCR categories

BCR value	What this means?
Below 0	Very poor VfM
Between 0 and 1	Poor VfM
Between 1 and 1.5	Low VfM
Between 1.5 and 2	Medium VfM
Between 2 and 4	High VfM
Greater than 4	Very high VfM

This therefore indicates that Converge offers 'very high' value for money. This is partly linked to the project's relatively low (revenue only) costs alongside its wide-ranging benefits – hence it would be expected to provide higher value for money than many capital projects, for example.

8. Sensitivity testing

8. Sensitivity testing

Sensitivity testing of nine different scenarios demonstrated that the project's BCR remained above six in all cases, with significant reductions in students and a focus only on mental health benefits having the greatest downward impact

To test the impact of different scenarios on the overall estimated benefits, NPSV and BCR of Converge, a series of high-level sensitivity tests were undertaken – as shown below:

Figure 8.1: Sensitivity scenarios

Scenario
a) 50% reduction in students enrolled (and associated % reduction in completers)
b) 50% increase in students enrolled (and associated% reduction in completers)
c) 50% increase in student volunteers
d) 50% reduction in student volunteers
e) 50% increase in overall project costs
f) 50% reduction in overall project costs
g) Direct mental health benefits only applied
h) HACT-specific benefits only applied
i) Survey results extrapolated against 50% of population (rather than 75%)

Figure 8.2: Sensitivity results

Scenario	NPSV	BCR
Base	£5.3m	11.8
a) 50% reduction in students	£2.7m	6.6
b) 50% increase in students	£7.8m	17.1
c) 50% increase in volunteers	£5.6m	12.5
d) 50% reduction in volunteers	£5.0m	11.2
e) 50% increase in costs	£5.0m	7.9
f) 50% reduction in costs	£5.5m	23.6
g) Mental health benefits only	£2.8m	6.7
h) HACT-specific benefits only	£4.9m	11.0
i) 50% extrapolation	£3.5m	9.1

The results in Figure 8.2 show that, even in the most negative of scenarios, the BCR remained at £6.60 benefit for every £1 spent. This indicates it is unlikely that the project will not deliver positive value for money in the future.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Methodology

This appendix details the methodology adopted for the socio-economic impact assessment
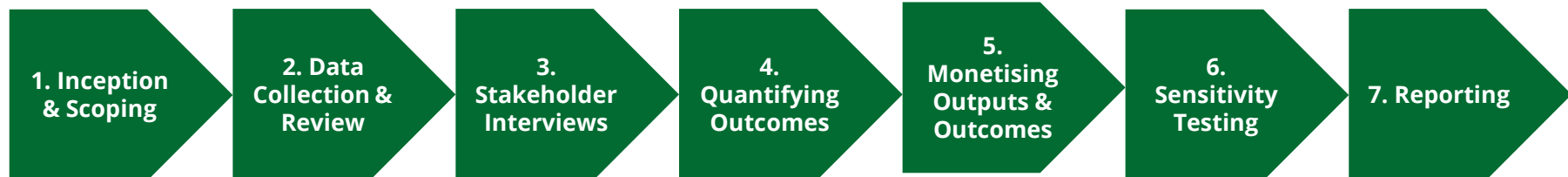
Overall approach

The socio-economic impact assessment was designed to be a quantitative exercise which would complement the primarily qualitative evaluation of Converge completed in 2022. It adopted a logic model approach which focused on quantifying the following, specifically for the 2022/23 academic year:

• Project inputs/expenditure

• Project outputs (immediate deliverables)

• Project outcomes/benefits (generated as a result of the outputs/delivery)

Following quantification of the outputs and outcomes, where appropriate and possible they were monetised – this enabled an assessment of the project's value for money.

To implement this logic model approach, a series of methodological stages were undertaken, as outlined below:

```
1. Inception   →   2. Data        →   3.              →   4.              →   5.              →   6.              →   7. Reporting
& Scoping          Collection &       Stakeholder         Quantifying         Monetising          Sensitivity
                   Review             Interviews          Outcomes            Outputs &           Testing
                                                                              Outcomes
```

The assessment commenced with a series of inception and development meetings in May and early June 2023, which led to the following:

• Initial understanding of available input and output data to be provided by YSJ University

• A list of documents to be reviewed as part of the assessment, helping to inform outcomes types/categories

• An initial list of potential outcomes to be measured as part of the assessment, based on the type of provision and range of outputs (this was an ongoing process and was further informed by documentary review and stakeholder consultation)

• Agreement to design and distribute an online survey made available to all 2022/23 Converge Students

• Agreement on a list of stakeholders to be consulted

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Subsequent to the inception meeting, the following activities took place:

- All documents were reviewed

- The list of outcomes was finalised, with agreement on the best method/evidence source to be used for quantifying each – this included using guidance from HMT Green Book-compliant sources (primarily the HACT Social Value Bank and GMCA Unit Cost Database)

- A request for data was sent to YSJ University and subsequently returned – primarily enabling capture of input and output data but also informing some of the outcomes

- The online survey was designed and distributed to all 2022/23 Converge Students – this focused specifically on informing the quantification of several outcomes and was completed by 75 individuals

- One-to-one interviews took place with several stakeholders, including:
  - Converge Students
  - Converge Students who had subsequently become volunteers within the project
  - Student Volunteers
  - A Discovery Hub Learning and Access Worker
  - A representative of the TEWV NHS Foundation Trust
  - A representative of York City Council
  - Key members of the Converge Project Team

Inputs / Expenditure data

Input and expenditure data for 2022/23 (and previous years) was provided by YSJ University. This included the following categories:

- Direct costs to YSJ University (staff, materials etc.)

- Direct costs to the NHS for delivering the Discovery Hub

- Direct cost of operating the Out of Character Theatre Company (an independent charity which forms a key component of Converge)

- Additional in-kind contributions (which represent opportunity costs) from YSJ University (room hire, office space and 0.7 FTE of the Converge Director's salary) – *none of these costs are specifically 'charged' to Converge*

All the above costs were included in the overall calculation of the project's 2022/23 expenditure.

Data was also provided regarding 'income' generated by YSJ University to support delivery of Converge. This included money from grant making trusts, the TEWV NHS Foundation Trust (additional to funding the Discovery Hub), the activities of CERT, and consultancy activities. This income was not subtracted from the overall cost of delivering Converge as it was either simply a different source of funding or was dependent upon the total funding to deliver the project.

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Output data

2022/23 output data for Converge was provided directly by YSJ University and included the following:

- Total number of enrolled Converge Students (split by both terms within 2022/23)

- Total number of Converge Students completing at least one course (completion rate)

- Total number of Student Volunteers

- Total number of full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs funded directly by Converge

- List of individual courses within Converge (split by both terms within 2022/23)

Outcome / benefit data

In both selecting and quantifying the outcomes considerable caution was taken to avoid duplicating or double counting benefits. Guidance from HMT Green Book-compliant sources was used to inform this process. For example, the HACT Social Value Bank confirmed that the different social wellbeing outcome types selected for Converge could be used in conjunction with each other. Despite this, some outcome metrics were ultimately reduced to avoid any double counting – an example of this occurred whereby the number of Converge Students undertaking post-Converge education (i.e. an undergraduate or masters degree following completion of engagement in Converge) was subtracted from the number of Converge Students achieving economic/productivity benefits from completing specific Converge courses.

The method for quantifying outcomes varied for each of the individual outcome types and was again partly informed by guidance from HMT Green Book-compliant sources. This is summarised in the table below and overleaf:

Outcome type	Summary of quantification method
Mental health outcomes	
Improved mental health for Converge Students	Survey of 2022/23 Converge Students specifically asked if respondents' mental health had changed since attending Converge. Respondents stating it had 'improved significantly' or 'improved slightly' represented positive answers (note that different levels of benefit were applied dependent on which positive answer was provided – see explanation of approach to monetisation for more details). The result was extrapolated against 75% of the 2022/23 Converge Student population. These results were also supported by responses from a survey of Converge Students in 2020, qualitative findings from the 2022 evaluation, stakeholder consultation and a variety of other documents.

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Outcome type	Summary of quantification method
Mental health outcomes	
Improved mental health for Student Volunteers	Based on a variety of sources, including quantitative findings from the 2022 evaluation and a variety of qualitative and anecdotal responses. Due to the limited robustness of this data, a very cautious estimate of 10% of all Student Volunteers was applied to this outcome. Furthermore, only 50% of the HACT benefit value was applied to these. These results were also supported by qualitative findings from the 2022 evaluation, stakeholder consultation and a variety of other documents.
Reduced usage of mental health services/provision	Survey of 2022/23 Converge Students specifically asked if the extent of respondents' use of mental health services had changed. Respondents stating they no longer used mental health services, had significantly reduced their use of them or had slightly reduced their use of them represented positive answers (note that different levels of benefit were applied dependent on which positive answer was provided – see explanation of approach to monetisation for more details). The result was extrapolated against 75% of the 2022/23 Converge Student population. Respondents stating they did not use such services prior to joining Converge were removed from the sample population size. These results were also supported by responses from a survey of Converge Students in 2020, qualitative findings from the 2022 evaluation, stakeholder consultation and a variety of other documents.
Social wellbeing outcomes	
Increased confidence for Converge Students	Survey of 2022/23 Converge Students specifically asked if respondents' confidence levels had changed since attending Converge. Respondents stating that their confidence levels had become significantly or slightly higher represented positive answers (note that different levels of benefit were applied dependent on which positive answer was provided – see explanation of approach to monetisation for more details). The result was extrapolated against 75% of the 2022/23 Converge Student population. These results were also supported by responses from a survey of Converge Students in 2020, qualitative findings from the 2022 evaluation, stakeholder consultation and a variety of other documents.

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Outcome type	Summary of quantification method
Social wellbeing outcomes	
Increased confidence for Student Volunteers	Based on results from the 2022 evaluation which identified that 48% of Student Volunteers strongly agreed that volunteering in Converge had improved their confidence levels and a further 44% agreed it had improved them answers (note that different levels of benefit were applied dependent on which positive answer was provided – see explanation of approach to monetisation for more details). These proportions were extrapolated against 75% of the 2022/23 Student Volunteer population. These results were also supported by qualitative findings from the 2022 evaluation, stakeholder consultation and a variety of other documents.
Converge Students undertaking volunteering activity	Survey of 2022/23 Converge Students specifically asked if respondents had undertaken different levels of volunteering activity within Converge or external to it (i.e. formally) since they started attending Converge. Dependent on the type of positive response. different levels of benefit were applied – see explanation of approach to monetisation for more details). The result was extrapolated against 75% of the 2022/23 Converge Student population. These results were also supported by responses from a survey of Converge Students in 2020, qualitative findings from the 2022 evaluation, stakeholder consultation, a variety of other documents and data from YSJ University.
Student Volunteers undertaking volunteering activity	Based on the number of Student Volunteers in 2022/23 provided by YSJ University. Documentary evidence and consultation with volunteers identified the type/level of volunteering which took place, which exceeded HACT guidelines associated with this benefit type.
Increased engagement in arts by Converge Students	Based on the proportion of 2022/23 Converge Students that undertook arts-focused activities within their courses, meeting DCMS guidance (associated with this benefit) of engaging in arts activities. A cautious estimate of 2 months per Converge Student was applied (the benefit value is applied per month) – in reality this may be higher as many participants attended more than one course during 2022/23 and some courses lasted longer than 2 months. These results were also supported by responses from a survey of Converge Students in 2020, qualitative findings from the 2022 evaluation, stakeholder consultation and a variety of other documents.

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Outcome type	Summary of quantification method
Economic / productivity outcomes	
Completion of Converge education courses	Based on the number of participants completing Converge courses in 2022/23, as provided by YSJ University.
Converge Students undertaking post-Converge education	Based directly on data provided by YSJ University which showed that 30 Converge Students across the previous 10-year period had progressed to other educational courses (primarily degree or post-graduate level) at YSJ University alone. Therefore, an estimate of 3 per year was applied (hence 3 for 2022/23) together with an additional 10% of this figure estimated to have accessed courses at other institutions (therefore, 3.3 in total). These results were also supported by qualitative findings from the 2022 evaluation, stakeholder consultation and a variety of other documents.
Converge Students accessing employment post-Converge	Based on a specific figure of 17 Converge Students taking on part-time employment roles solely at YSJ University in 2022/23 (the project team confirmed all individuals taking these roles were previously unemployed). These results were also supported by qualitative findings from the 2022 evaluation, stakeholder consultation and a variety of other documents. It is probable that other Converge Students will have progressed to employment elsewhere following engagement in Converge, but this was not quantified due to a lack of robust evidence or data.
Student Volunteers accessing employment and/or education	YSJ University (Converge team members) estimated that between 20% and 40% of Student Volunteers per year progressed to additional full-time educational courses relevant to Converge as a result of their experiences volunteering for the project. A mid-point value (30%) was therefore applied. These results were also supported by qualitative findings from the 2022 evaluation, stakeholder consultation and a variety of other documents. However, due to a lack of robust data and the inability to prove attribution, this outcome was not ultimately monetised.

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Monetising outcomes / benefits

The approach to monetising outcomes/benefits was based on specific guidance from the aforementioned HMT Green Book-compliant sources – and utilised the quantified figures calculated as per the approach outlined on the previous pages. A summary of the approach to monetising each outcome/benefit is provided below. It is important to note that lower proportions of certain benefit values have been applied to ensure a prudent and cautious approach in some cases.

Outcome type (source)	Summary of monetisation method
Mental health outcomes	
Improved mental health for Converge Students (HACT)	The HACT Social Value Bank benefit value ('outside of London') for improved mental health / relief from depression and anxiety was inflated from 2020 to 2022 using HMT's GDP deflators. Different levels of this benefit value were then applied to the relevant proportions of Converge Students linked to their response to the assessment's survey question regarding improvements to their mental health, as follows: • 75% of benefit applied to respondents with significantly improved mental health • 50% of benefit applied to respondents with slightly improved mental health Benefit values were also adjusted in line with different HACT values for age categories, and applied proportionately to the Converge Student age breakdown for 2022/23. An additionality ratio of 73% was applied to calculate net benefits (from gross), based on HACT guidance.
Improved mental health for Student Volunteers (HACT)	The HACT Social Value Bank benefit value ('outside of London') for improved mental health / relief from depression and anxiety was inflated from 2020 to 2022 using HMT's GDP deflators. Only 50% of the value of this benefit was applied due to a relatively limited evidence base. This value was applied to 10% of 2022/23 Student Volunteers, as outlined in the previous section. No age breakdown was provided for Student Volunteers, hence HACT's 'age unknown' value was used. An additionality ratio of 73% was applied to calculate net benefits (from gross), based on HACT guidance.

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Outcome type (source)	Summary of monetisation method
Mental health outcomes	
Reduced usage of mental health services/provision – fiscal and economic benefits (GMCA Unit Cost Database)	GMCA Unit Cost Database values for average annual **fiscal savings** were applied to the relevant proportions of 2022/23 Converge Students which responded positively to the survey question regarding a reduction in the use of mental health services (values were not inflated as they are from 2022). Different levels of this fiscal value were then applied to the relevant proportions of Converge Students linked to their response to the assessment's survey question, as follows: • 100% of value applied to respondents no longer using mental health services • 75% of value applied to respondents with a significant reduction in the use of mental health services • 50% of value applied to respondents with a slight reduction in the use of mental health services An additionality ratio of 73% was applied to calculate net benefits (from gross), based on HACT guidance. The same approach as above was also used for the annual **economic value** associated with reduced usage of mental health services, again using GMCA Unit Cost database guidance and data.

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Outcome type	Summary of monetisation method
Social wellbeing outcomes	
Increased confidence for Converge Students (HACT)	The HACT Social Value Bank benefit value ('outside of London') for improved/high confidence was inflated from 2020 to 2022 using HMT's GDP deflators. Different levels of this benefit value were then applied to the relevant proportions of Converge Students linked to their response to the assessment's survey question regarding changes to their confidence levels since joining Converge, as follows: • 100% of benefit applied to respondents with significantly improved confidence • 50% of benefit applied to respondents with slightly improved confidence Benefit values were also adjusted in line with different HACT values for age categories, and applied proportionately to the Converge Student age breakdown for 2022/23. An additionality ratio of 73% was applied to calculate net benefits (from gross), based on HACT guidance.
Increased confidence for Student Volunteers (HACT)	The HACT Social Value Bank benefit value ('outside of London') for high confidence was inflated from 2020 to 2022 using HMT's GDP deflators. Different levels of this benefit value were then applied to the relevant proportions of Student Volunteers linked to their response to the 2022 evaluation survey question regarding changes to their confidence levels since joining Converge, as follows: • 100% of benefit applied to respondents who strongly agreed their confidence had increased • 50% of benefit applied to respondents who agreed their confidence had increased No age breakdown was provided for Student Volunteers, hence HACT's 'age unknown' value was used. An additionality ratio of 73% was applied to calculate net benefits (from gross), based on HACT guidance.

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Outcome type	Summary of monetisation method
Social wellbeing outcomes	
Converge Students undertaking volunteering activity

(HACT) | The HACT Social Value Bank benefit value ('outside of London') for regular volunteering was inflated from 2020 to 2022 using HMT's GDP deflators. Different levels of this benefit value were then applied to the relevant proportions of Converge Students linked to their response to the assessment's survey question regarding levels of volunteering, as follows:
• 100% of benefit applied to respondents undertaking regular formal volunteering
• 25% of benefit applied to respondents undertaking regular informal volunteering

Benefit values were also adjusted in line with different HACT values for age categories and applied proportionately to the Converge Student age breakdown for 2022/23.

An additionality ratio of 81% was applied to calculate net benefits (from gross), based on HACT guidance. |
| Student Volunteers undertaking volunteering activity

(HACT) | The HACT Social Value Bank benefit value ('outside of London') for regular volunteering was applied to all Student Volunteers within the 2022/23 Converge project (recognising the extensive levels of volunteering undertaken by all volunteers, which met or exceeded the HACT guidance for regular volunteering). No age breakdown was provided for Student Volunteers, hence HACT's 'age unknown' value was used.

An additionality ratio of 81% was applied to calculate net benefits (from gross), based on HACT guidance |
| Increased engagement in arts by Converge Students

(DCMS) | The DCMS benefit value for monthly engagement in the arts was inflated to 2022 using HMT's GDP deflators. This value was then applied to the proportion of 2022/23 Converge Students taking part in arts-related courses and undertaking arts-related activities – note the monthly value was doubled in recognition of all Converge courses lasting for a period of at least 2 months.

An additionality ratio of 73% was applied to calculate net benefits (from gross), based on HACT guidance for similar benefits. |

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Outcome type	Summary of monetisation method
Economic / productivity outcomes	
Completion of Converge education courses (GMCA)	*This outcome/benefit was not monetised due to: a) the lack of formal accredited qualifications associated with the courses (achieving specific accreditation levels is a basis of the GMCA Unit Cost Database guidance); and b) the relatively short duration of each course when compared to qualifications recognised within the GMCA Unit Cost Database .*
Converge Students undertaking post-Converge education (GMCA)	The GMCA Unit Cost Database annual economic benefit value for Level 4 qualifications was deemed the most relevant level of learning to apply to Converge Students who progressed to additional education after their engagement in Converge (3.3 people for 2022/23). This was based on feedback and evidence from the Converge project team which identified that these individuals progress to full-time courses at Level 4 or above. The benefit value was not inflated as it is from 2022. Benefit values were also adjusted in line with different GMCA values for gender and applied proportionately to the Converge Student gender breakdown for 2022/23. Additionality of 72% was applied based on specific study by London Economics regarding deadweight in education and skills.
Converge Students accessing employment post-Converge (HACT)	The HACT Social Value Bank benefit value ('outside of London') for part-time employment was inflated from 2020 to 2022 using HMT's GDP deflators. This benefit value was then applied to the total number of 2022/23 Converge students obtaining employment at YSJ University following their engagement in Converge. Benefit values were also adjusted in line with different HACT values for age categories and applied proportionately to the Converge Student age breakdown for 2022/23. An additionality ratio of 85% was applied to calculate net benefits (from gross), based on HACT guidance.
Student Volunteers accessing employment and/or education (N/A)	*This outcome/benefit was not monetised due to limited robustness of data and attribution*

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Additional notes regarding the methodology adopted

The following points are also noteworthy regarding the assessment methodology:

- In addition to the primary data and evidence sources used to calculate outcomes, a range of other sources were used to quality assure the direction of findings. These included:
  - A Converge Student feedback survey delivered in Autumn 2020 and completed by c60 participants
  - The 2022 evaluation of Converge, which incorporated a range of qualitative findings and some quantitative analysis
  - Converge Student case studies developed in consultation with a range of relevant stakeholders (e.g. Discovery Hub team)
  - '10 Students for 10 Years' – a document detailing the experiences of 10 Converge Students
  - A report summarising the roles of, and outcomes associated with, volunteers within Converge between 2020 and 2023
- Gender and age breakdowns for the 2022/23 Converge Student cohort were provided and were used to inform benefit values where appropriate/possible
- As explained in the main report, the breakdown of 'end beneficiaries' is as follows:
  - Social wellbeing outcomes represent benefits to the individual and overall society (some will also benefit the UK economy) – as do improved levels of mental health
  - Economic and productivity outcomes represent benefits the UK economy (and also the individual) – as does the economic value associated with reduced mental health service use
  - Fiscal savings from reduced mental health service use represent case-releasing benefits to the UK Exchequer

Appendix II: Assumptions and limitations

This appendix outlines assumptions and limitations associated with the socio-economic impact assessment

- Expenditure data did not include rates/utilities – these can be considered as sunk costs and would also be marginal given the proportion of the overall University's activity/expenditure that is attributable to Converge

- All costs and benefits are viewed as 'present value' and not discounted given that the assessment focused solely on the 2022/23 year and did not incorporate any persistence effects

- The number of FTE jobs supported directly by Converge was not included in the monetised outcomes/benefits. This was because these jobs are a direct result of Converge's expenditure and are required to achieve the project's outputs and outcomes/benefits

- HACT guidance and values includes those from the 2020 Social Value Bank (adjusted for inflation). An updated Social Value Bank was developed in 2023 but the cost of accessing this prevented its use (a decision made by YSJ University). Brief discussions with HACT representatives indicated that the value of several benefits within the new 2023 Social Value Bank had increased substantially in comparison with the 2020 Social Value Bank

- Some HACT outcomes/benefits include an additional 'health top-up' value. This was not applied to any outcomes in this assessment due to the potential for duplicating other benefits (e.g. those related to mental health)

- Aligned to specific guidance within the GMCA Unit Cost Database, with the exception of reductions in mental health service use, only economic benefit values were applied to GMCA-specific outcomes, not fiscal benefits

- For prudence, additional economic and/or fiscal benefit values were not applied in relation to the greater employability of Converge Students and Student Volunteers. This was because such benefits had the potential to duplicate the productivity benefits associated with educational achievement

- It is likely that several of the benefits (particularly economic and fiscal benefits) will persist for a period of c5-10 years following their initial annual benefit – and hence would generate additional financial benefits. Such persistence effects were not included within the assessment due to the already high BCR and associated value for money. In contrast, social wellbeing benefits are 'one-off' and may ultimately accrue over a longer time period

- The assessment is focused on only a single year (2022/23) and therefore is based on all Converge Students and Student Volunteers engaging in Converge for the first time. If a longer-term analysis were to take place this would need to take account of 'repeat' participants and volunteers – and it is therefore likely that the value for money would be lower on average (per year)

- The inflation source applied to benefit values pre-2022 was HM Treasury's GDP Deflators (latest version at time of writing)

- The assessment only covers Converge Student, Student Volunteers and expenditure aligned to YSJ University, not for Converge activity at partner universities/institutions

Appendix III: Key references

This appendix details key references used within the socio-economic impact assessment

- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills / London Economics (2012b) Assessing the deadweight loss associated with public investment in education and skills

- Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) (2014) Quantifying and Valuing the Wellbeing Impacts of Culture and Sport

- Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) (2022) Unit Cost Database version 2.3.1

- Homes and Communities Agency (now Homes England) (2014) Additionality Guide, fourth edition

- Housing Associations Charitable Trust (HACT) and Daniel Fujiwara (2020) Community Investment Values from the Social Value Bank

- York St John University (2022) The Converge Evaluation Project 2020-22

- York St John University (2018) 10 Years of Converge – 10 Students for 10 Years

- York St John University (2023) Converge case studies illustrating progression

Appendix IV: Glossary of terms

This appendix provides a glossary of terms related to the socio-economic impact assessment

Term	Description
Inputs	The resources (money, time, staff, facilities) that are required to deliver an intervention
Outputs	The volume of an intervention's direct actions or deliverables, for example the provision of specific courses and the number of people directly attending/benefiting from these
Outcomes	Meaningful changes that occur as a result of delivering the intervention's outputs – also referenced as benefits within this assessment
Monetisation	Where a financial value is placed upon specific outputs or outcomes/benefits
Additionality	The net result (i.e. output or outcome), after taking account of deadweight, leakage, displacement and economic multipliers. Hence an additionality ratio is used to calculate the net benefit (from the original gross benefit)
Gross	The impact of an intervention (or specific outcome) prior to applying an additionality ratio
Net impact	The impact of an intervention (or specific outcome) once an additionality ratio has been applied (i.e. accounting for deadweight, leakage, displacement and economic multipliers)
Persistence	The time period over which the benefits generated will endure (not applicable to this assessment due to its single-year focus)
Net Present Social Value (NPSV)	The present value of an intervention's benefits minus the present value of its costs
Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)	The relationship between the relative costs and benefits of an intervention, expressed in monetary terms
Mental health benefits	Benefits specifically related to the improved mental health of individuals, which can also provide societal, economic and fiscal benefits
Social wellbeing / value benefits	Benefits specifically related to the improved social wellbeing of individuals, which can also provide societal and economic benefits
Economic / productivity benefits	Benefits specifically related to improving the overall UK economy, which can also provide benefits to individuals
Fiscal benefits	Benefits which provide fiscal (cash-releasing) benefits to the UK Exchequer

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