I'm a... Programme:

2025/26 Autumn Term Summary Report

September to December 2025

Report: January 2026

MangorollaCIC

Background

The *I'm a... Programme* (IAP) is a series of online, student-led public engagement projects that give school students across the UK real interactions with working professionals. The programme comprises:

- ***I'm a Scientist, Get me out of here*** (IAS, imascientist.org.uk)
- ***I'm an Engineer, Get me out of here*** (IAE, imanengineer.org.uk)
- ***I'm a Mathematician, Get me out of here*** (IAM, imamathematician.uk)
- ***I'm a Computer Scientist, Get me out of here*** (IACS, imacomputerscientist.uk)
- ***I'm a Geographer, Get me out of here*** (IAG, imageographer.uk):
  Launched as a pilot activity in November 2025

Professionals create profiles on the website and engage directly with school students through real-time, text-based chats, and answering posted follow-up questions. Students ask questions about whatever they want; questions about careers, research, as well as their wider interests and lives outside of work.

Through taking part, students engage with STEM professionals from a diverse range of backgrounds, disciplines, and industries. They get to see scientists as ordinary people with hobbies, interests, pets, and families. They learn about STEM careers and opportunities in higher education, while seeing how what they learn in school relates to the world around them.

This report looks at activity across the programme during the Autumn 2025/26 term (September to December 2025).

Contents

Summary of activity

5,961
estimated students reached

145
active schools

68%
students from priority schools

318
chats booked

14,051
chat invitations sent

1,517
participant hours volunteered[1]

79,369
lines of chat

948
answers to follow-up questions

2,274
votes cast

	IAS	IAE	IAM	IACS	IAG	Total[2]
Student accounts active	2,938	35	592	345	363	**4,258**
Estimated true active students[3]	*4,113*	*49*	*829*	*483*	*508*	***5,961***
Schools active	108	11	16	18	9	**145**
Professionals given access	544	264	197	211	81	**782**
Professionals active[4]	303	31	69	62	37	**387**
Chats booked	221	8	37	27	25	**318**
Chat invitations sent to professionals	10,205	388	2,015	1,114	329	**14,051**
Chats took place	203	7	32	26	22	**290**
Total professional interactions[5]	1,063	34	167	129	93	**1,486**
Lines of chat	56,772	712	9.576	6,618	5,691	**79,369**
Average lines per chat	280	102	299	255	259	**274**
Follow-up questions asked	390	6	114	18	61	**589**
Follow-up questions approved	305	6	73	16	44	**444**
Answers to follow-up questions	609	14	143	45	137	**948**
Votes cast	1,496	21	292	196	269	**2,274**

[1] 30 minutes for each chat attended plus an average of 2 hours per active participant spent writing profiles and answering follow-up questions
[2] Participants take part across multiple projects; total values for students, schools, and professionals are the counts of unique participants
[3] Many students take part in pairs, or share computers or tablets; the estimated true number of students engaged is the students engaged (i.e. student accounts active in a chat) multiplied by 1.4
[4] All professionals who added a photo to their profile were given the opportunity to take part. Despite the ease of participation, some were less able to take up the opportunity as they would have liked due to unanticipated increases in workloads, or outside factors.
[5] Total instances of a scientist attending a chat

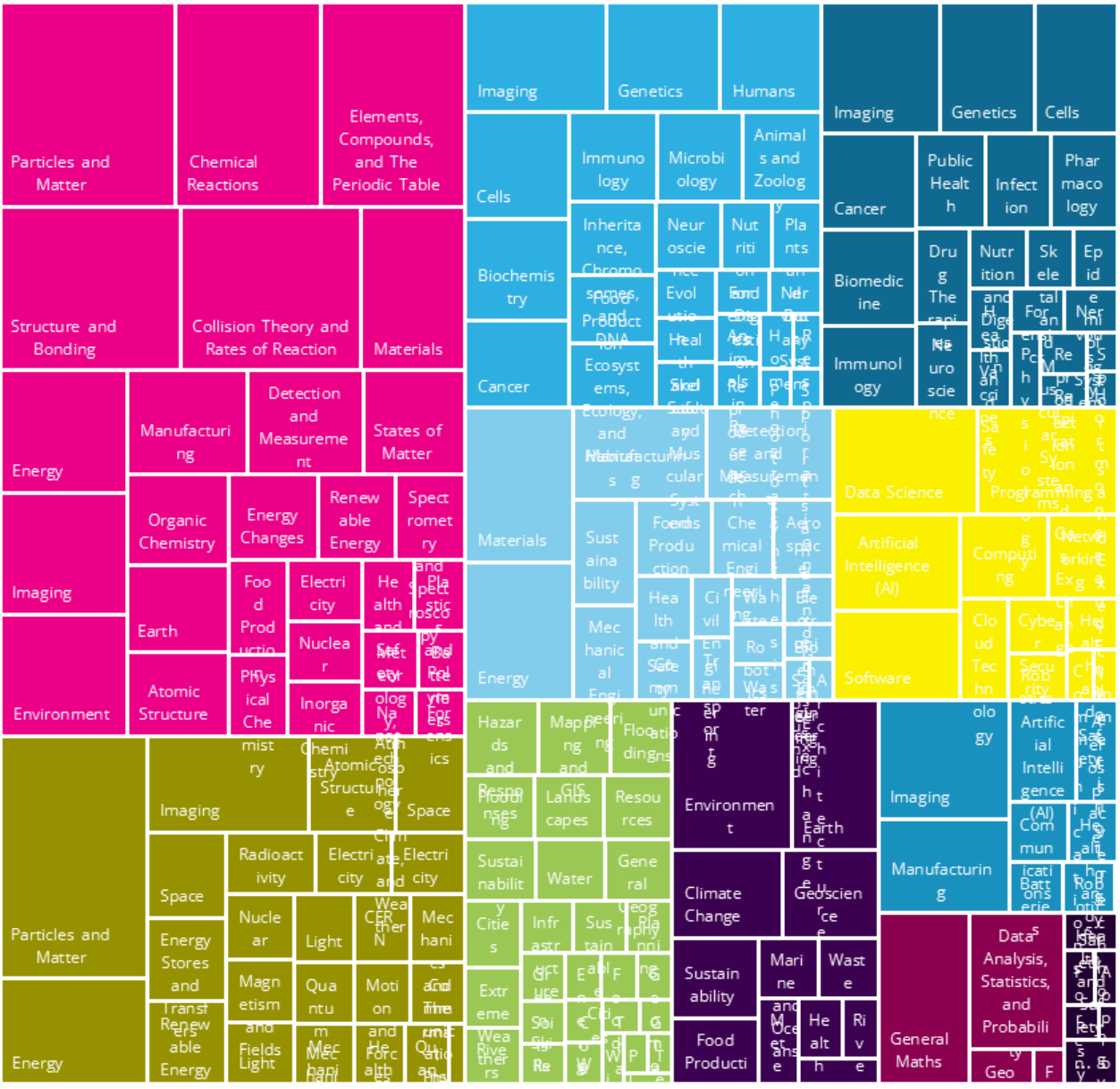
Participants and activity

Participating professionals

Scientists, engineers, mathematicians, computer scientists, and geographers

Themes represented participants

In the charts below, the size of the box is proportional to the number of participants representing each theme. *Chemistry* themes are the most frequently represented, followed by *Physics*, *Biology*, and *Health*.

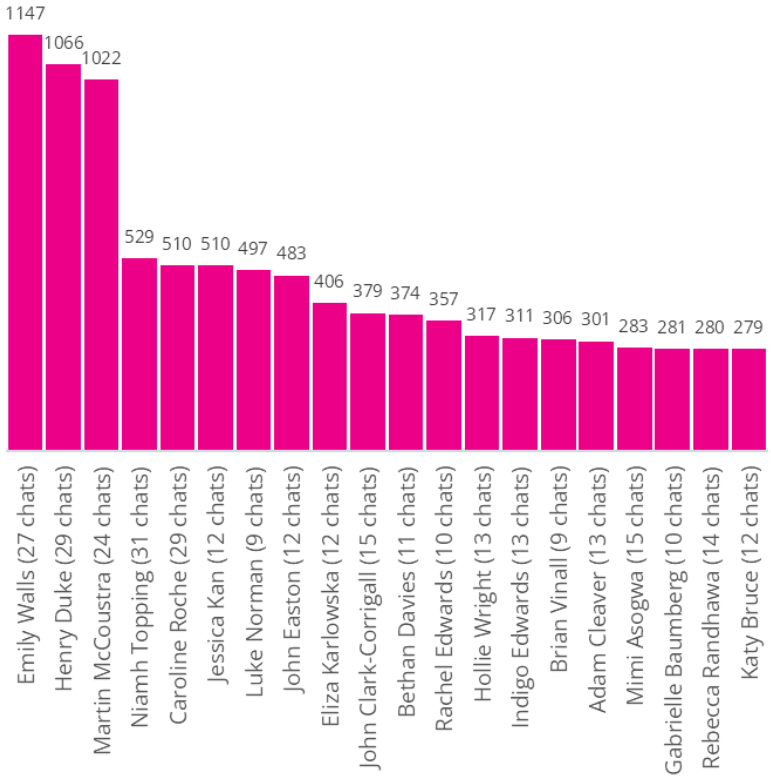


Theme groups in order of frequency: Chemistry · Physics · Biology · Health · Engineering · Computer Science · Geography · Earth and Environmental Science · Technology · Maths · Psychology

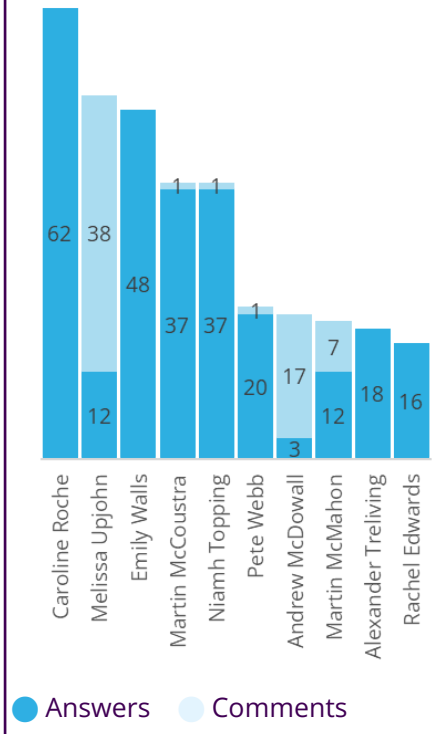
Scientist activity

20 most active participants in chats

Figures show lines of chat, chats attended shown in label



10 most active participants answering follow-up questions



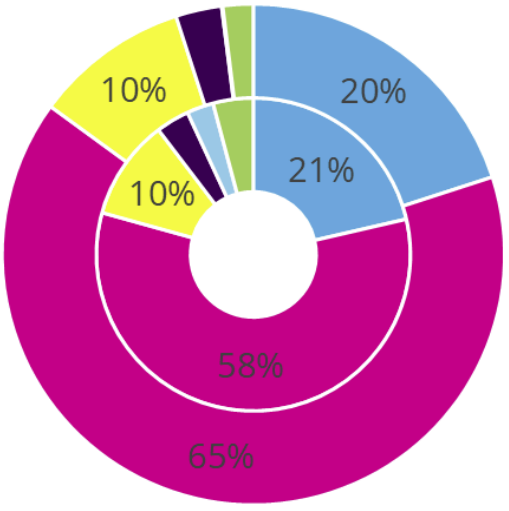
The average active participant attended 3 chats, writing 42 lines; answering 1 follow up question and posting 0 comments.

Schools

School phase

Participating secondary schools represented 58% of schools and 65% of active students; while primary schools made up 21% of schools and 20% of students.

This is in part due to primary students being more likely to share accounts, or have chats run through a single account with the teacher asking questions on behalf of the students.



Inner doughnut: Proportion of schools[6]
Outer doughnut: Proportion of active students[7]

Primary Secondary 16 plus Special
Mixed/All through Other/Unknown

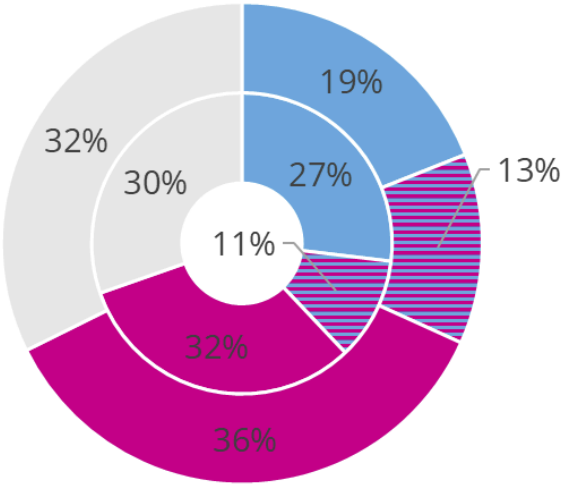
[6] %s not labelled on schools: Mixed/All through, 3%; Special, 3%; Other/Unknown, 4%
[7] %s not labelled on students: Special, 3%; Other/Unknown, 2%

Widening participation and distant schools

We prioritise opportunities for widening participation (WP) schools[8], and schools distant from major research HEIs[9]. Teachers at these schools are offered additional support, and earlier booking for chats.[10]

70% of schools and 68% of active students were from priority schools:

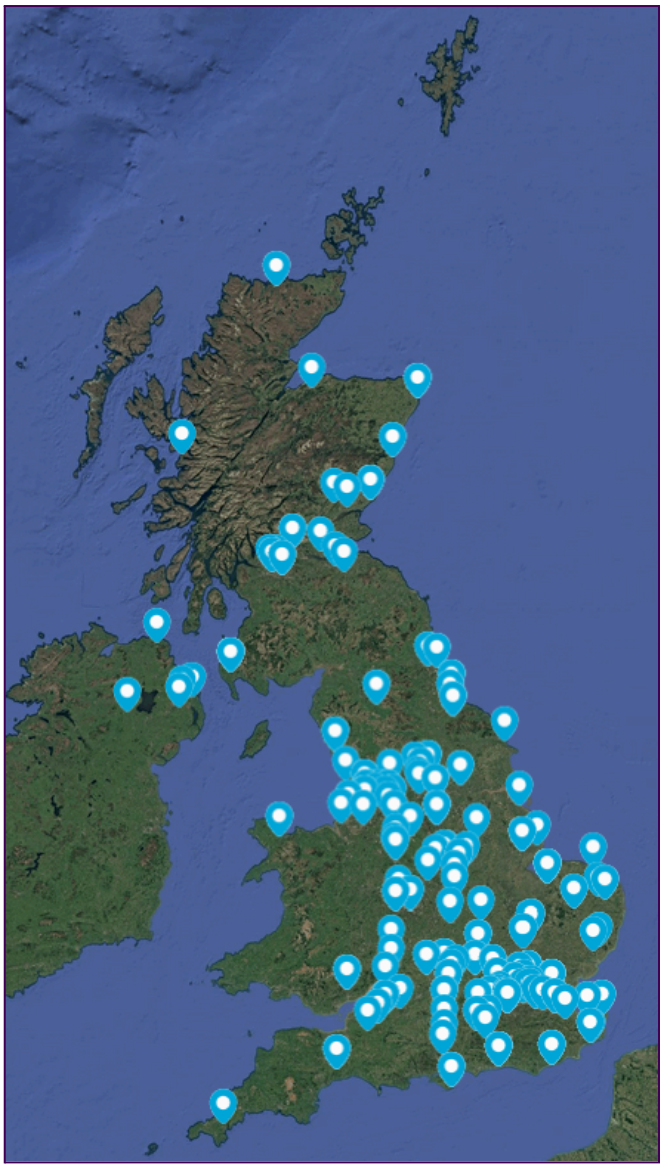
- 38% of schools and 32% of students were from widening participation schools
- 59% of schools and 49% of students were from schools distant from HEIs



Inner doughnut: Proportion of schools
Outer doughnut: Proportion of active students

- Schools with high WP quintiles
- Schools distant from HEIs with high WP quintiles
- Schools distant from HEIs
- Non-priority schools

Locations of participating schools



Map: Locations of schools booking chats
[Map imagery: ©2026 NASA]

[8] We define a priority widening participation school as one with a high proportion of students (quintiles 4 and 5) receiving Free School Meals, or Pupil Premium; or living in the most deprived areas in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Additionally, FE colleges, SEND schools, and PRUs are considered priority schools.

[9] Schools more than 30 minutes from their nearest major research HEI are half as likely to receive a visit from a scientist as those within 15 minutes travel time. State schools more than 30 minutes from a HEI are priority distant schools. See: about.imascientist.org.uk/2017/school-engagement-in-stem-enrichment-effect-of-school-location/

[10] Read more about how we prioritise schools: about.imascientist.org.uk/widening-participation-prioritising-places-for-schools/

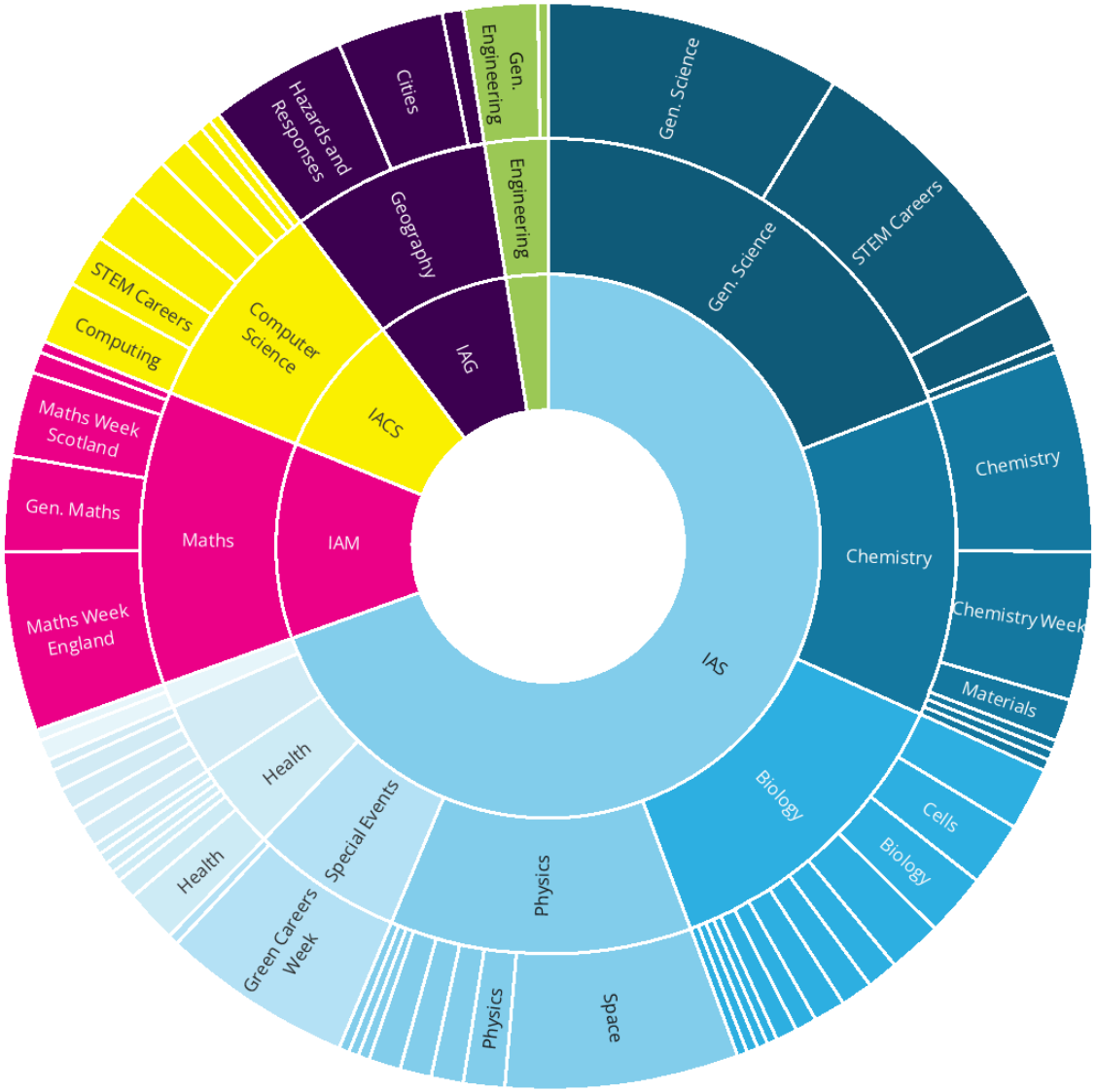
Chats

Bookings by theme

In the chart below, the size of the box is proportional to the number chats in each theme, grouped by theme branch.[11] [12]

In terms of broad themes — regardless of project — *General Science* was the most popular, followed respectively by, *Chemistry*, *Biology*, *Physics*, *Maths*, *Computer Science,* and *Geography*.

STEM Careers is a theme that can be booked on any STEM project, combined, these chats made up 10% of the total sessions.



[11] The IAS themes not labelled are — in order — *Earth and Environmental Sciences*, and *Technology*. The most popular *Biology* theme was *Food Production*. The project not labelled is IAE.

[12] *Chemistry*, *Biology,* etc chats booked under the *General Science* branch have been included in the counts for the respective branches. *Chemistry Week*, and *Maths Week* chats are included in the *Chemistry*, and *Maths* branches respectively, rather than the *Special Events* branch under which they were booked.

Discussion topics in chats

In the word clouds below the size of each word is relative to its frequency of use by students and professionals in chats (colour has no significance).

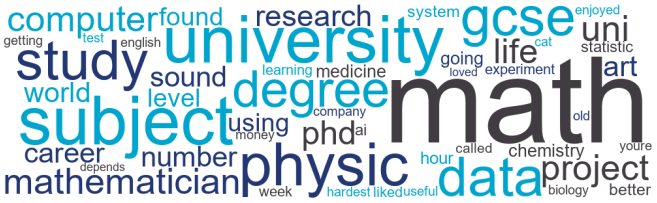
Chats across all projects

Discussion topics by project

IAS

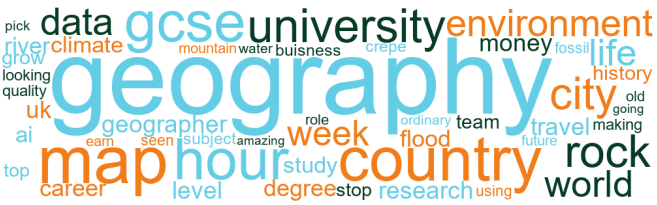
IAE

IAM



IACS

IAG



Examples of good engagement

When asked for advice on where to look for science work experience, professionals suggested a range of routes, including hospitals, university research programmes and summer studentships. Others recommended contacting companies directly and exploring opportunities through science fairs and similar events.

wards25 @all do you have any advice for students wanting to gain work experience within the science industry? e.g. where to look/how to go about it

Kip H @wards25: Hospitals have volunteer departments. I always suggest finding something there. It's also possible to look up the local hospitals (possibly Northern General for Sheffield?) and find the department you want online and try phoning/sending an email. I did it when I was in year 13 and they hired me straight out of school. Then I spent 18.5 years in the NHS!

lukenorman @wards25: Universities always are looking for research summer students, or work experience students. Find an academic at your local university who's research you like the sound of and contact them

Mark @wards25: Do some research and target companies to approach directly, use family connections if you have any. Going to STEM events and science fairs is a way to get to speak with scientists directly and most companies offer work experience

emilywalls @wards25: some univeristies offer work experience weeks for many different science areas where you can work in labs for a week or two!

When asked about what happens to light that enters a black hole and whether it can escape elsewhere, the scientist provided a detailed explanation of current scientific understanding. The student then built on this by referring to their own knowledge, demonstrating active engagement with the topic.

more532dows3 @sraimundo black holes let no light escape it right, so if it pulls everything into it does anything that get sent into come out anywhere else?

sraimundo @more532dows3: that is right, nothing can escape a black hole. As far as we know, everything that goes into a black hole stays there, it doesn't come out anywhere else in the Universe

more532dows3 @sraimundo: ive heard that there is a thing called a white hole so can things come out of this or does the gravitational force push stuff away from it, how many white holes have been found?

sraimundo @more532dows3: I have heard of it too, for now it is just a theory which means that we don't have evidence to prove that it exists (we have never observed a white hole)

more532dows3 @sraimundo: if this theory is correct how could it change our view on space?

sraimundo @more532dows3: it would change our understanding of black holes and space itself. It would mean that matter could be transported across the Universe via a black hole and that black holes could get smaller if they lost material that has inside them

more532dows3 @sraimundo: so if white holes existed and they could push matter away from what if a white hold and a black hole came into contact with each other and what would be the outcome?

sraimundo @more532dows3: oh wow I have no idea but that is an interesting scenario. I think you should become a scientist so you can investigate and answer that question :)

In response to a question about previously lost discoveries, the scientist discussed the rediscovery of an insect specimen from the 14th century and described the procedures involved in its identification and naming.

oozy532yods52 @lukenorman have you ever found any discovery that has been lost for years before

lukenorman @oozy532yods52: Yes!! We found a brand new insect from the 14th century in an old book! Not been named yet but hopefully named after me :P

oozy532yods52 @lukenorman: what was the new insect you discovered

lukenorman @oozy532yods52: It is some kind of mite but we genuinely don't know at the moment, more work is needed!

oozy532yods52 @lukenorman: oh ok but how would you know how to find the name of it

lukenorman @oozy532yods52: We would come up with a new name :)

lukenorman @oozy532yods52: It was like timetravelling!

Following a question from a student about the materials used creating filters, the scientist described the materials involved and possible alternative uses, prompting the student to relate the discussion to their own knowledge of molecular scale.

jean532kaon83 @Georgia R are the materials you make used as filters for anything else

Georgia R @jean532kaon83: Great question! They can be used as filters for water and also air. They can also be used to transport molecules

jean532kaon83 @Georgia R: what is the size difference in different molecules for example it is my understanding that starch is a molecule larger than others is that correct

Georgia R @jean532kaon83: They range A LOT. You are right that starch is a really big chain of glucose molecules so can get really long. Whereas a molecule like CO2 is about 0.3nm, which is tiny! I think something as big as starch wouldn't fit in a MOF

jean532kaon83 @Georgia R: thank you

When asked about their career progression, the engineers shared their experiences and pathways into engineering. The conversation then developed into a discussion about work experience opportunities.

WayneY @all How did all of your careers progress and can you explain a bit more about what you are doing now?

Ruth A @WayneY: I got my current job after I left uni, and I've now been in the same company for about 6 years. I might try something new soon!

Henry D @WayneY: great question! I finished college in 2001 and was fed up with education, so I didn't go straight to uni like everyone else!

Henry D @WayneY: I worked for a couple of years, then did some travelling and eventually went to uni in 2006

Henry D @WayneY: I got a hell of a lot more out of the experience than I would have done going straight out of college

WayneY @Henry D: That's lovely. Would you say gaining work experience is more important than having qualifications for getting a job?

Henry D @WayneY: I think gaining life experience is the most important thing

Henry D @WayneY: anyone can learn the academic stuff, but its everything else that makes you the person you are

Henry D @WayneY: over the years, I have done all sorts - factory work, building work, cleaning, catering

Henry D @WayneY: I worked in a cinema for a couple of years

Ruth A @WayneY: It really depends on the job, but often it's not black-and-white what qualifications you need. Often in interview they are looking at you as a whole person

Henry D @WayneY: I have learned valuable lessons from everything I've done

sophiep @WayneY: For me work experience was useful for working out what I actually wanted to do - I had ideas about what I liked and didn't like, but in some cases the reality of working in that job/industry wasn't what I expected.

uzairabdullah @WayneY: Both are important, but in different ways. Qualifications provide the foundation – they show you have the technical knowledge and discipline to learn.

uzairabdullah @WayneY: Work experience, on the other hand, shows you can apply that knowledge in real situations, solve problems, and work with people. In most cases, it's the combination that stands out.

uzairabdullah @WayneY: Qualifications get you through the door, but experience shows you can deliver once you're there.

Winning participants

Each half term, the scientist with the most student votes wins £500 to spend on further STEM engagement.[13]

I'm a Scientist winners

Winner of the 1st half term

Emily Walls

Emily is an astrophysics PhD student in Manchester her research involves studying stars in galaxies that are 'close' to us. She studies the activity of stars in galaxy M82 from when stars are born until they die and explode.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed engaging with all of the students and teachers answering all of your weird and wonderful questions in the chats about space, physics and careers. A lot of the questions asked were aspects of science and physics that I had not previously thought about before, so you really put me to the test! …"

Read their winner's blog:
crookes.imascientist.org.uk/2025/10/28/congratulations-to-our-term-winner-emily-walls

Winner of the 2nd half term

Paul Trusty

Paul works with materials science and helps companies find the right materials for their products.

"Participating in this initiative really made me reflect on how having a varied scientific career: from aerospace engines to pharma, ice cream, and yes, martial arts, can make for rich and engaging conversations. It's reminded me how rewarding it can be to share one's journey and spark curiosity in others. …"

Read their winner's blog:
crookes.imascientist.org.uk/2026/01/02/congratulations-to-our-term-winner-for-december

[13] There are 6 IAS winners per year: 1 each half term. There is 1 winner per academic year for each other project; announced at the end of the Summer term.

Feedback and impact

Participant feedback

Feedback from scientists, engineers, computer scientists, mathematicians, and geographers

Participants are invited to complete a feedback survey in June and December each year. The following data and comments comprise feedback from the December 2025 survey.

Comparison with other public engagement activities

Participants completing a feedback survey for the first time since 2024 were asked to compare their experience in IAS (etc) with other public engagement activities in which they have been involved.

Participants consistently described the *I'm a... Programme* as a distinct and valuable contrast to more traditional public engagement activities; typically in-person, presentation-led, and often time inflexible. The online, text-based Q&A format was appreciated for being accessible, flexible, and easy to integrate into work schedules; with no travel, minimal preparation, and short 30-minute sessions. Many participants highlighted the benefits of anonymity and chat-based interaction in encouraging wider student participation, enabling more confident questioning, and giving students greater control over the direction of discussions. The programme was also seen as enabling broader reach, particularly to schools and young people who might not otherwise have opportunities to engage directly with STEM professionals.

Some participants did note some limitations when compared with face-to-face engagement, including limited opportunity for deeper exploration, and some missed the use of visual aids, or hands-on elements. Overall, however, participants report the programme to be a well-organised, inclusive, and efficient model of public engagement that complements more traditional approaches, offering high impact for relatively low time and resource investment.

> *Compared to other public engagement I've done, the I'm a... Programme was much more interactive and conversational. Instead of a one-off talk, presentations, or conference, it involved ongoing discussions with young people, which made it feel more engaging and responsive. The online format also seemed to help students feel more comfortable asking questions. Overall, it felt more like a two-way conversation than traditional outreach activities.*
>
> Dr Paul Preston

I love the I'm a... Programme. It's so engaging and you get some really interesting questions from the students that sometimes make me question how I look at things too. It's been really good in terms of improving my own science communication too - chatting to A level students is very different to primary school students so it's great having to be flexible and adapt and talk about my job in different ways.

Alana McNulty

I'm a... is very different to any other type of Sci comms that I have done. I have done mostly in person events, both presentations and activities within schools, youth groups and public events. I think (although of course I can't see into the classroom) I'm a... is much better suited to getting a wider range of students involved than my in person sessions due to the anonymous function. It certainly would have helped when I was a pupil!

Emma

It has been really positive - a well structured programme, which makes it easy to engage according to my availability, excellent technical support for IT issues, clear guidance on what's expected from me, rewarding to be part of in terms of the engagement from students both for chats and offline questions and the Academy opportunity has been excellent CPD too

It is less overwhelming and socially demanding (so not as tiring). I'm autistic, so I often find the busy and noisy environments of outreach hard, even if I enjoy it. The text based function means I can take part from anywhere. It's also easier to fit around my studies so I can get outreach experience without it impacting my PhD too much.

It was a good way of interacting with students without the need to travel and attend in person. That made it much more accessible for me as a volunteer, and I was able to fit the short sessions around work commitments. I have not had that with other volunteering opportunities.

It's a great programme that has lots of benefits particularly being INCLUSIVE as sessions are anonymous for students and no video involved. In a single session, Students can ask multiple scientists any science/career related questions which is GREAT. I wish I had something like this whilst growing up!

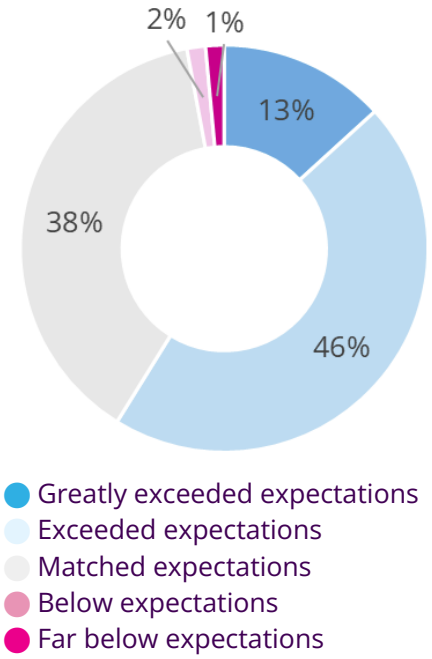
Dr Mimi Asogwa

Expectations vs. experience

Participants were asked how their experience has met with expectations they had prior to taking part. For 97% of respondents, the experience has met or exceeded expectations.

Participants who reported that the experience exceeded their expectations highlighted several consistent factors. Many were surprised by the high level of student engagement, noting that pupils asked insightful, thoughtful, and often unexpected questions, creating genuine, fast-paced conversations rather than the quieter or more passive engagement they had anticipated. The programme was frequently described as more enjoyable, engaging, and thought-provoking than expected, with participants valuing the challenge of adapting their expertise for different age groups and finding the interactions personally rewarding and motivating. Expectations were also exceeded by the quality of delivery and support, particularly the effectiveness of moderators, the smooth and user-friendly platform, and the clear organisation and responsiveness of the programme team. Additionally, participants were impressed by the ease, flexibility, and impact-to-time ratio, as well as the added value of inclusive design features, opportunities to connect with other scientists, and the wide range of schools and students reached.

How has your experience met with expectations you had before taking part?



I have found it a lot more thought provoking than I realised, it can be challenging to put your research into a digestible format, which varies depending on what age group you are speaking with. It is also a lot more fun than I originally thought it would be!

I've really enjoyed meeting the other scientists as much as the young people! Also, the interface is quite easy to use.

Really easy to follow, super flexible in terms of opportunities that fit my areas of expertise and multiple time slots available which can be factored into my working schedule - much more accessible than doing in person events in school and feels much more tailored to students' needs than more formal classroom sessions which I've done previously

The moderators are excellent, and the variety of different classes, age groups, locations around the UK is also really encouraging to see.

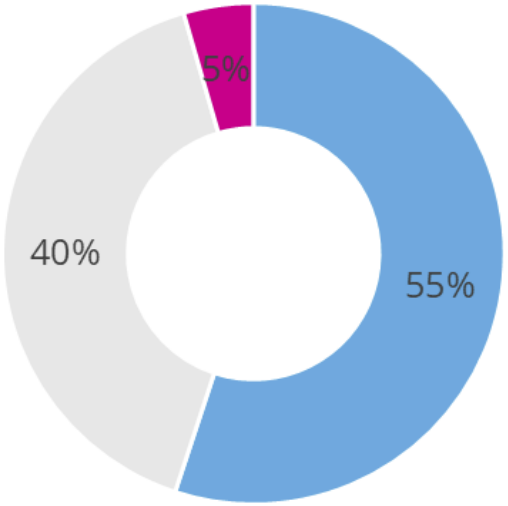
The chats are so varied and such great questions are asked and I do feel the questions and answers are more meaningful than I was perhaps expecting.

The time/commitment flexibility is great. I love the range of questions students come up with. When presenting in person, I have often been met with a quieter, less engaged audience but this doesn't seem to be the case with Im a... sessions which is a really great feeling

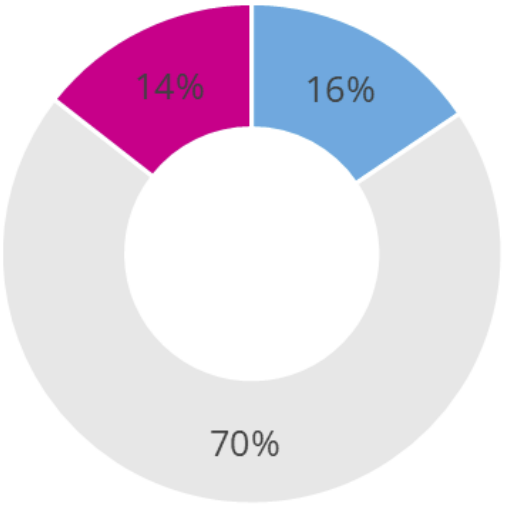
Emma

Change in amount of public engagement

Has the <u>total</u> amount of public engagement you do changed?



Has the amount of public engagement you do <u>outside of the</u> <u>I'm a... Programme</u> changed?



Increased No change Decreased

Participants were asked to comment on the amount of public engagement they are currently doing, compared to before taking part in the *I'm a...* Programme. When thinking about the <u>total amount of engagement</u> (including IAS etc), 55% reported an increase in engagement activities.

However, when considering only <u>activities outside of IAS (etc)</u>, the majority (70%) reported no change; suggesting that — for the majority — IAS (etc) is providing additional opportunities, rather than replacing participants' existing activities.

Participants were asked in what way they felt participating in IAS (etc) has contributed to any change in their amount of public engagement.

Being told that what I do is cool, and interesting etc by the kids has led to me posting more interesting social media (Linkedin in particular) and explained some technical details in a more accessible way

Dr Paul Preston

It was the gateway drug that led me to becoming a public engagement professional!

Dr Kirsty Ross

It's inspired me more and I want to do more mentoring and discussing science with students. I take each opportunity that I can.

Alana McNulty

Many of those reporting an overall decrease in their activity commented on IAS (etc) being an easy to maintain activity where barriers may exist for accessing other projects.

I have less opportunity to do in-person public engagement. I now do less public engagement overall, but more 'I'm a scientist..' than previously because it is a type of engagement I can fit easily into my work day.

I don't think it has made much of an impact. I Have simply had less time to do my in person events but this isn't because I'm a... has taken up more of my time, but I'm a... can fit into my schedule better so I can still do I'm a... events whereas I am struggling to fit others in

Much easier way to contribute to PE. More convenient and can fit round work, meaning more opportunities to engage

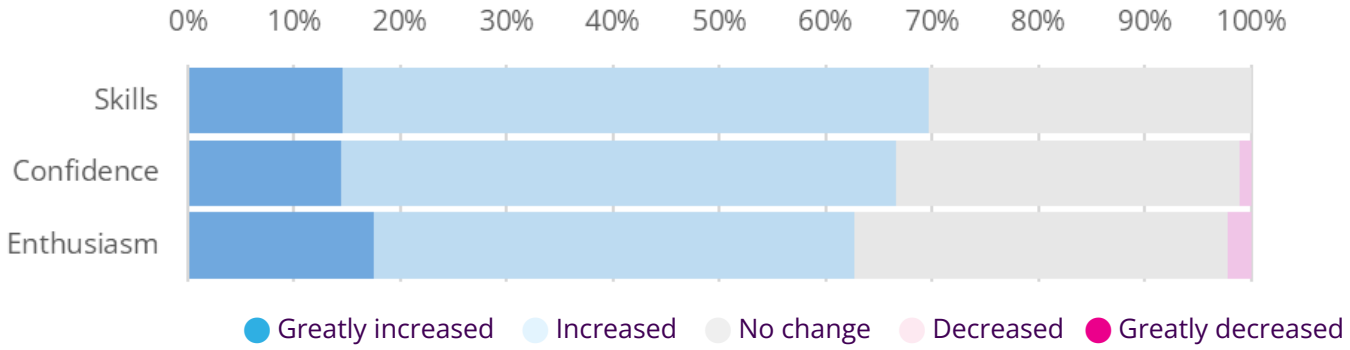
Since changing job, opportunities to do public engagement activities have been rare. Participating in I'm a... gives me the opportunity to engage again

It has been easier to book a chat when I fancy it and have a spare minute. Previously outreach has been an ordeal that needed organisation between several people and co-ordination - that's all handled for me with IAS. While doing IAS I feel like I am satisfying my outreach itch with less commitment. This frees up time to contribute to other important activities (outreach and other)

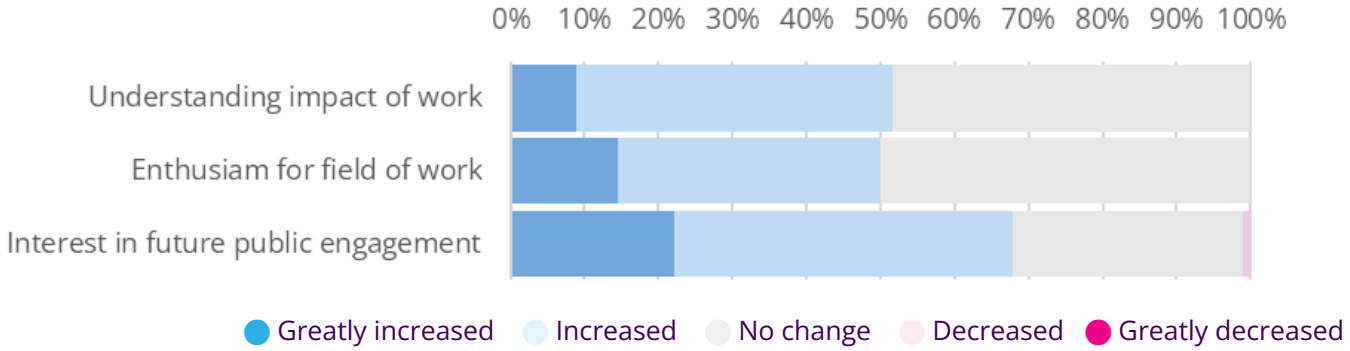
I've needed to take a step back from outreach due to higher workload, but the I'm a... Programme has been easy to continue with as it is less demanding of my time.

Skills and quality in public engagement

What impact, if any, has your experience with the activity to date had on your skills in, confidence in, and enthusiasm for communicating with lay audiences?



What impact, if any, has your experience with the activity to date had on your understanding of the impact of your work on society, your enthusiasm for your field of work, and your interest in taking part in future public engagement activities?



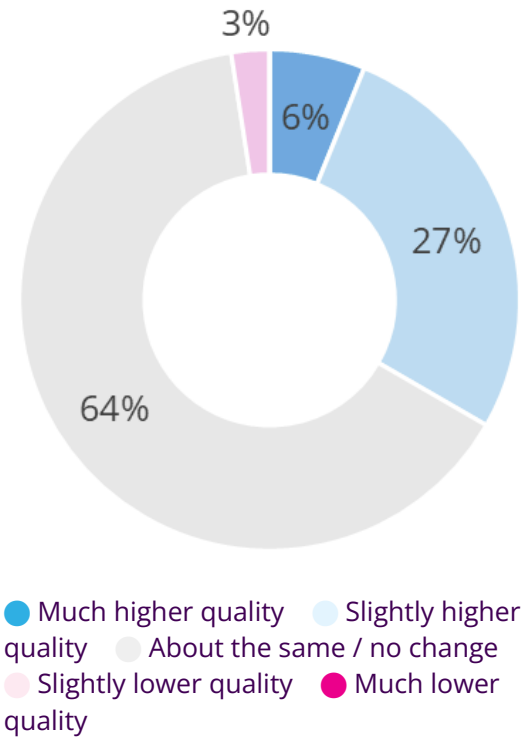
Scientists reported a positive impact across all areas. The most positive impact was reported on skills communicating with lay audiences (70% reported increase), with the majority of respondents reporting increases in confidence in, enthusiasm for, and interest in future public engagement activities (67%, 63%, and 68% reported increases respectively).

Participants were asked about the quality of their engagement work outside of IAS (etc) since they began taking part, and in what way it had changed.

Participants reported that the project has had a significant and positive impact on their public engagement skills. Many participants report increased confidence in interacting with diverse audiences and handling unpredictable questions, attributing this to the regular, structured opportunities for practice provided by the project. Several noted that repeated engagement helped them overcome initial nervousness and approach interactions more conversationally and inclusively.

Participants also reported improved communication skills, particularly in simplifying complex or technical concepts for non-specialist audiences. Respondents described improvements in tailoring explanations to different age groups and backgrounds, and in making their work more relatable and accessible. Peer learning and observation were also highlighted, with participants drawing inspiration from others' approaches and integrating new strategies into their own practice.

Have you noticed a change in the quality of the engagement work you do outside of the* I'm a... Programme, *since you began taking part?



I'm trying to make my external activities more student-led, rather than just me talking or demonstrating.

You really have to keep participating in engagement activities in order to grow and refine your output. Many events are sporadic throughout the year whereas [IAS] is much more frequent and helpful to stay sharp in your messaging. In the past I've felt far more nervous and worried about participants not understanding, that is weakened by regular [IAS] participation.

It has really helped with the thinking on my feet side of things. I'm no longer fazed by the random questions I'm asked in schools, because I've been asked most of them online already! :D

Increased confidence in answering questions, being more prepared for the random / off topic questions - treat them as a conversation starter rather than dismiss them

IAS enables a very fast paced environment where you can iterate on ideas - I work in an area that is very hard to connect with students, and having ample practice at rewording and explaining it in the right way gives me a better feel for how to connect with not just students, but the public, policymakers, and other non experts.

Ben Dryer

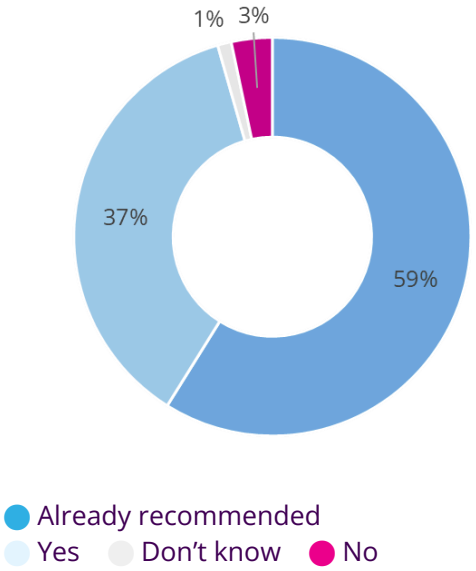
Since taking part in 2012, my skills have improved which has a knock on effect on my deliveries. I still refer to the report from IAS regarding distance from universities to inform my engagement strategies.[14]
Dr Kirsty Ross

Overall, the project is perceived as a key factor in participants' professional development in public engagement. By combining frequent practice, reflective learning, and exposure to diverse audiences, it helps participants refine both their messaging and delivery. The feedback suggests that these experiences not only enhance confidence and clarity but also foster adaptability, inclusivity, and ongoing skill development in public-facing roles.

Recommend to a colleague

96% of respondents would recommend, or already had recommended the activity to a friend or colleague.

Would you recommend the activity to a friend or colleague?



Final comments

Participants were asked if there were any additional comments they would like to share.

Participants expressed overwhelmingly positive sentiment, stating they would like to continue participating long term. Many described the experience as enjoyable, motivating, and well worth their time. Alongside this, some suggested improvements such as calendar integration, clearer reminders, easier cancellation, visibility of sign-ups.

I have never had more interesting questions asked about my work! And the genuine interest is incredible.

[14] *School engagement in STEM enrichment: Effect of school location:* about.imascientist.org.uk/2017/school-engagement-in-stem-enrichment-effect-of-school-location/

Teacher feedback

Teachers are invited to complete a feedback survey in the weeks following their final chat session each term. Comments and data below comprise feedback provided throughout 2025, across the *I'm a... Programme*.

Expectations vs. experience

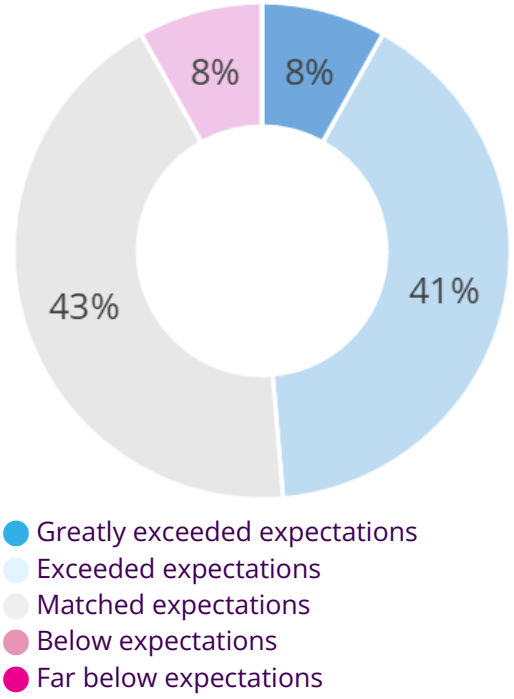
Teachers taking part in an *I'm a...* activity for the first time were asked how their experience met with expectations they had prior to taking part.

For 92%, the experience matched or exceeded expectations.

Teachers reporting that the experience exceeded expectations commented on generating high levels of student engagement and enthusiasm. Students were excited to receive responses to their questions and demonstrated genuine curiosity, asking thoughtful and insightful questions. The scientists were highly approachable, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic, providing detailed and timely answers that helped students connect with "real-life" STEM professionals and sparked interest in potential STEM careers.

Teachers were pleasantly surprised by how well students engaged with the format, which respondents reported they found easy to use, flexible, and safe, allowing students to participate at their own comfort level. Overall, the activity was widely enjoyed and viewed as impactful, with many students expressing a strong desire to take part again in the future.

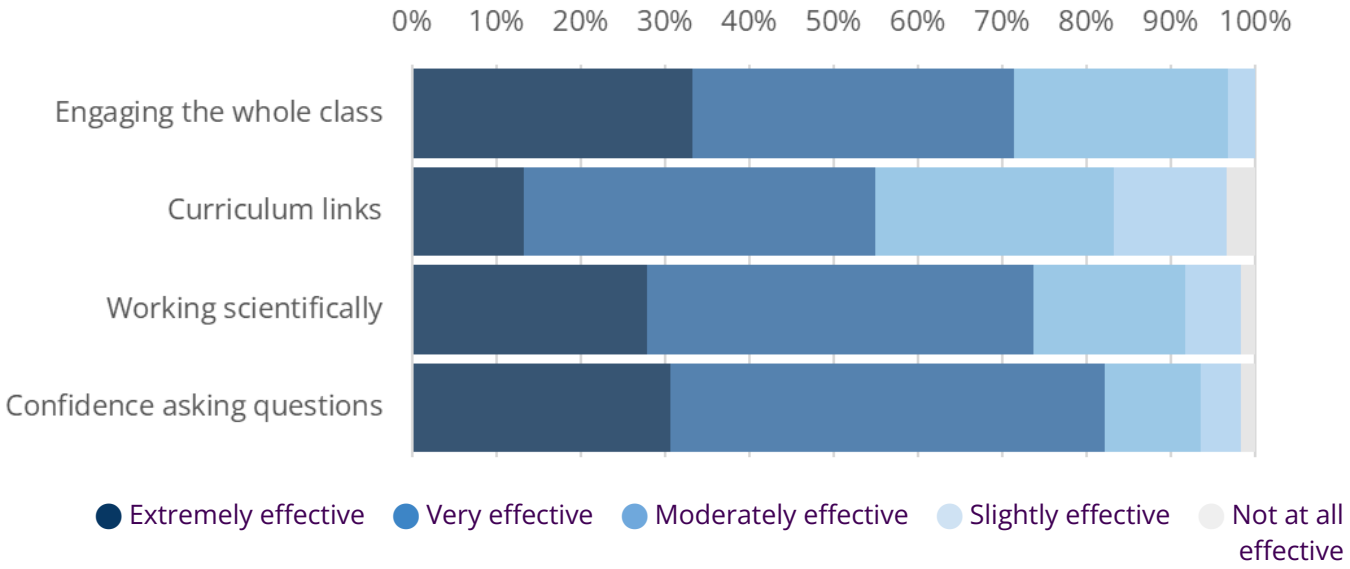
How has your experience met with expectations you had before taking part?



Rating effectiveness

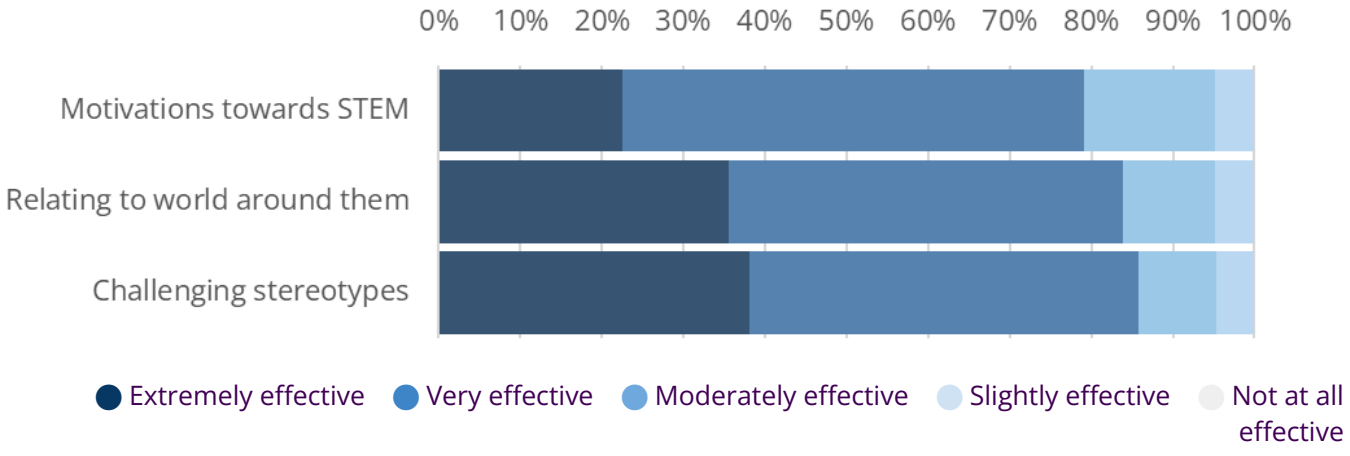
***Student learning:* How do you find the activity for the following?**

- *Engaging the whole class*
- *Supporting student learning about relevant curriculum topics*
- *Supporting student learning about how STEM works / working scientifically*
- *Improving students' confidence in asking questions about STEM*



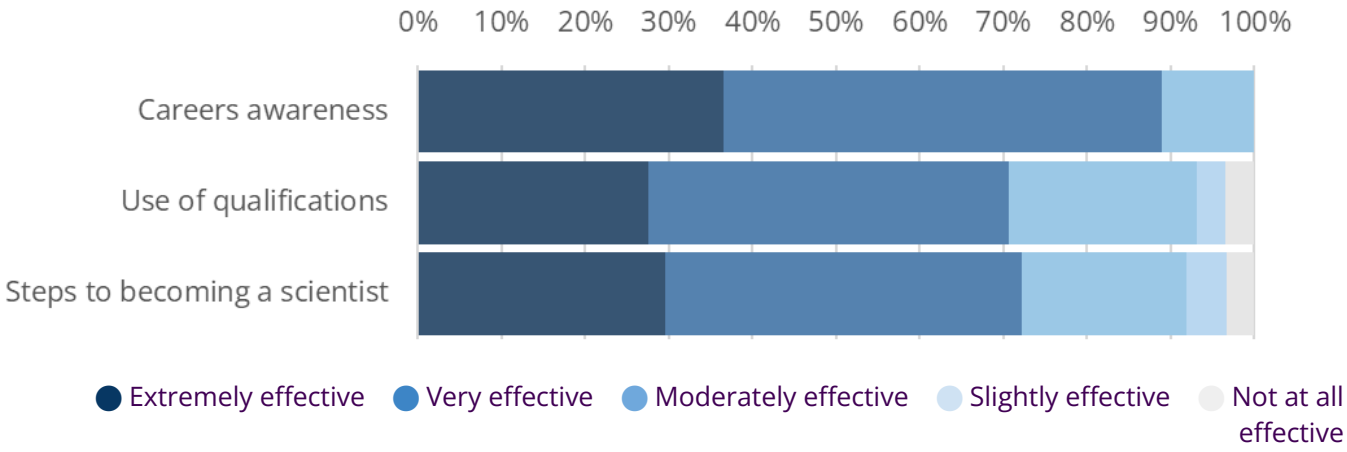
***Attitudes and motivations:* How do you find the activity for the following?**

- *Improving students' motivations towards STEM*
- *Helping students see how STEM relates to the world around them*
- *Challenging students' stereotypes about scientists and STEM professionals*



***Careers:* How do you find the activity for the following?**

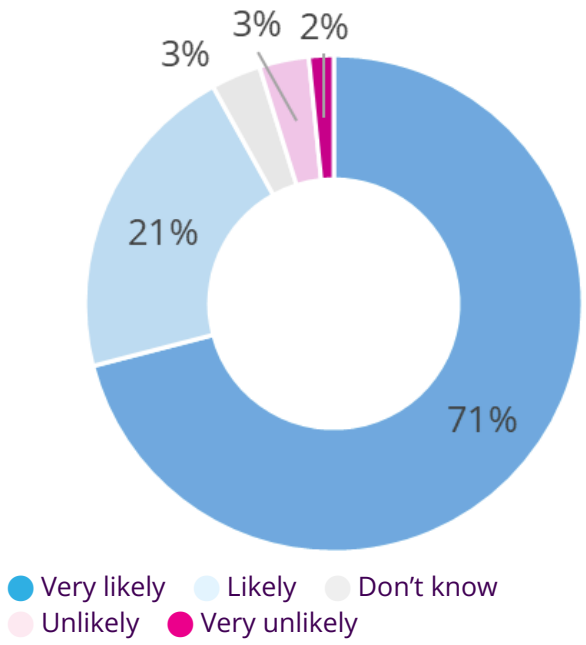
- *Developing students' awareness of STEM careers*
- *Developing students' awareness that STEM qualifications can be useful even if you don't want to be a scientist, engineer, or mathematician*
- *Improving students' understanding of the steps to becoming a scientist, engineer, or mathematician*



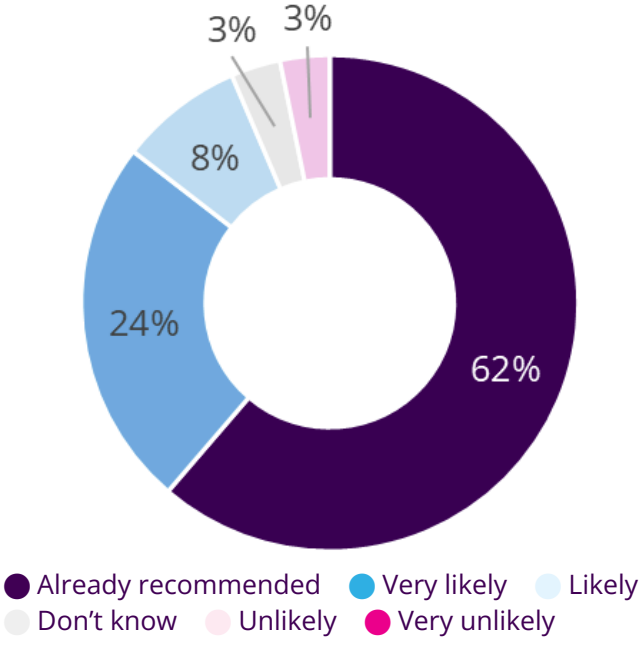
Teachers found the activity to be effective in all areas, with the most positive impact reported for developing awareness of STEM careers, where 89% reported it to be 'extremely' or 'very effective'; challenging stereotypes about STEM professionals, with 86%; helping students see how STEM relates to the world around them, with 84%; and improving students' confidence in asking questions about STEM, with 82%.

Overall satisfaction

How likely are you to take part in another* I'm a... *activity in the future?



How likely are you to recommend an* I'm a... *activity to a colleague?



The openness and help from the scientists was amazing, the students were really engaged in the activity, and everyone was so polite.

Tasha Bell

This is an excellent set up for schools. I wish we could have more time to spend on it and the other activities that you have. Thanks!

Deborah Trotter

I love this activity. I teach in a special needs school and despite some of the students struggling with reading and writing they all take part enthusiastically. I love how the scientists will answer deep scientific questions but also have time to tell the students their fave colour or if they have a pet!

Vicky

This is a great service which affords students an opportunity to engage with scientists that would otherwise be difficult to do

Even although I have been fortunate to take part in many Live Chats with my classes over the years, I am always pleasantly surprised by how much my children enjoy the chats and are always engaged in the conversations.

M Reilly

I value these sessions so much that they are written into my science curriculum from Y6-Y11 with the expectation that all teachers take part with their classes. I have encouraged the Maths team to get involved and promoted the new Geography feature to the Humanities Lead.

Parents sometimes respond after these activities as pupils go home discussing their conversations so it gets whole families talking about STEM. From a parent following this chat:

"I just wanted to share how much Edi really enjoyed chatting with the scientists yesterday. He has talked about it a lot and showed me and his dad separately the transcripts. He was very proud of the fact they responded to his questions! What a lovely activity to do with them!"

... having a range of professionals with different jobs and different backgrounds for students to chat to is so valuable. The format makes it easy for any student no matter how quiet to ask questions.

Maria Sheehy

Funders and partners

Between September and December 2025, the *I'm a...* Programme was funded and/or worked in partnership with:

- **Babraham Institute**
  babraham.ac.uk
- **CGI**
  cgi.com
- **The Genetics Society**
  genetics.org.uk
- **Institute of Chemical Engineers**
  icheme.org
- **Johnson Matthey**
  matthey.com
- **Lantra**
  lantra.co.uk
- **MRC Laboratory of Medical Sciences**
  lms.mrc.ac.uk
- **University of Nottingham: Nanoscale and Microscale Research Centre**
  nottingham.ac.uk/nmrc
- **National Centre for Computing Education**
  teachcomputing.org
- **National Centre for Atmospheric Science**
  ncas.ac.uk
- **NC3Rs**
  nc3rs.org.uk
- **Quadram Institute**
  quadram.ac.uk
- **Rosalind Franklin Institute**
  rfi.ac.uk
- **The Royal Geographical Society**
  rgs.org
- **The Royal Society of Chemistry**
  rsc.org
- **Science and Technology Facilities Council**
  stfc.ukri.org
- **Statisticians in the Pharmaceutical Industry**
  psiweb.org
- **STEM Ambassadors Scheme**
  stem.org.uk/stem-ambassadors
- **University of Manchester: Division of Cancer Sciences**
  research.manchester.ac.uk/en/organisations/division-of-cancer-sciences
- **Victrex**
  victrexplc.com

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