I'm a Scientist, Get me out of here:
The Genetics Society Funding Report
2025

I'm a Scientist, Get me out of here (IAS, imascientist.org.uk) is an online, student-led, public engagement project that gives school students across the UK real interactions with scientists and other STEM professionals.

In 2025 The Genetics Society (GenSoc, genetics.org.uk) **funded the IAS project to engage students with scientists working in genetics and biology.**

This report is a summary of the activity and interactions of The Genetics Society funded participants during 2025.

IAS is part of the I'm a... Programme (IAP), a series of public engagement activities also including:

- *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)

Summary of activity

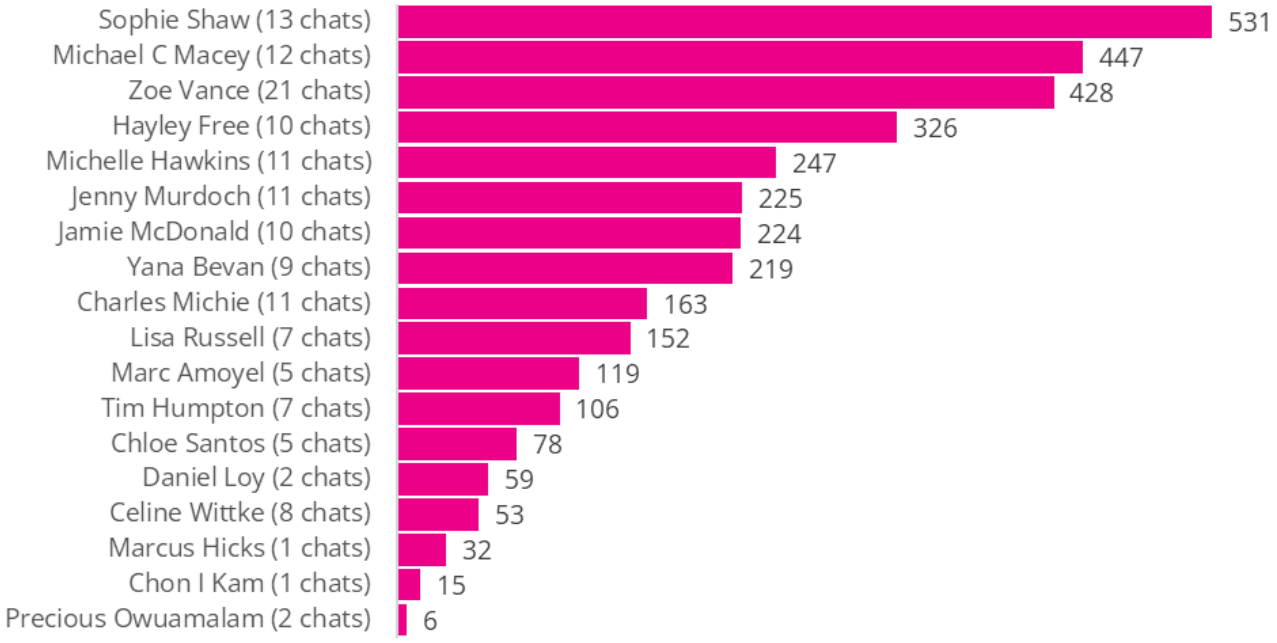
GenSoc funded **participants** given access	**37**	**Chats booked** (signed up to by GenSoc funded participants)	**118**
GenSoc funded **participants actively participated**[1]	**19**	**Invitations received** by GenSoc funded participants	**1,521**
Schools booked chats attended by GenSoc funded participants	**73**	**Chats took place** with GenSoc funded participants	**106**
Student accounts active in chats with GenSoc funded participants	**1,704**	**Interactions** by GenSoc funded participants [2]	**146**
Estimated true ***students engaged in chats*** [3]	***2,386***	**Lines of chat** (in chats attended by GenSoc funded participants)	***19,902***

[1] Participants active in chats and answering follow-up questions. All participants 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 due to unanticipated increases in workloads, or outside factors.
[2] Total instances of a scientist attending a chat
[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

Scientist chat activity

The chart below shows how The Genetics Society funded participants took part in chats, showing both the number of chats they attended (in the label) and the total number of chat lines they contributed.

The average scientist took part in 10 chats, writing 152 lines.[4]

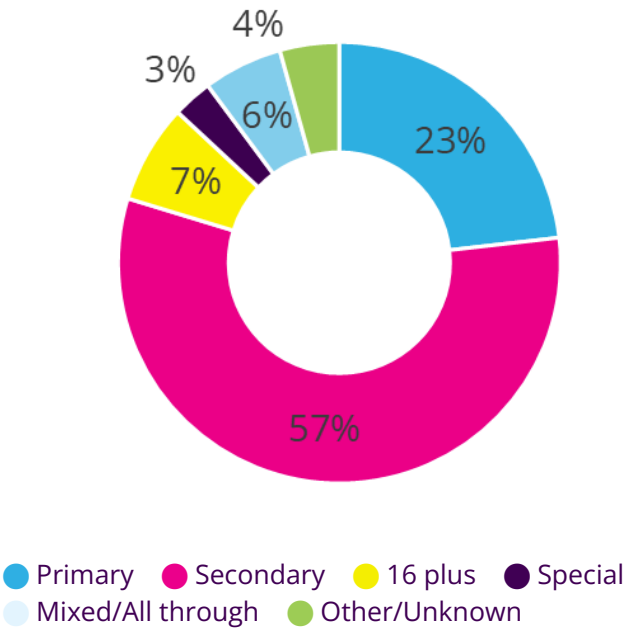


School chat activity

School phase

The chart shows the breakdown of schools that took part in chats with The Genetics Society funded scientists.

Secondary schools made up the largest group, accounting for 57% of participating schools. Primary schools represented 23%, while 16+ institutions comprised 7%.



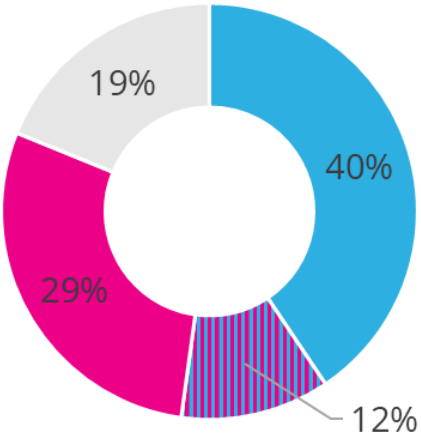
[4] 18 The Genetics Society funded participants were active in chats. Additionally 1 scientist was active answering follow-up questions, though did not take part in any chats.

Widening participation and distant schools

We prioritise opportunities for widening participation (WP) schools[5], and schools distant from major research HEIs[6]. Teachers at these schools are offered additional support, and earlier booking for chats.[7]

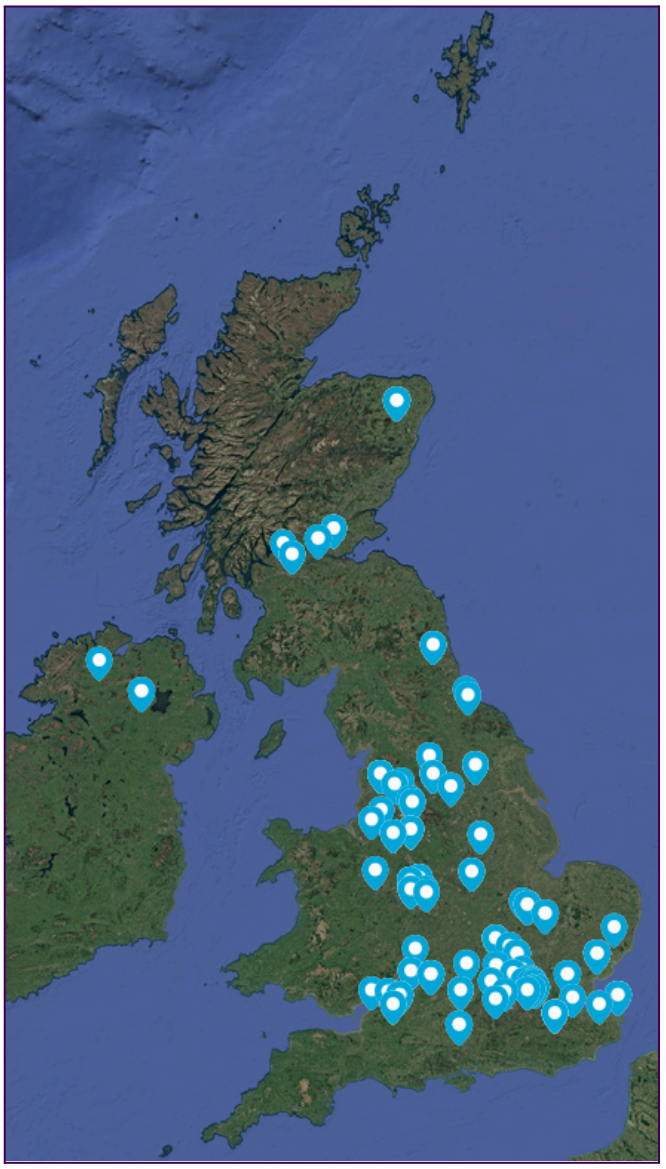
81% of schools participating in chats with The Genetics Society funded participants were priority schools:

- 52% of schools were widening participation schools
- 41% were distant from HEIs



- 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 that booked chats attended by The Genetics Society participants
[Map imagery: ©2026 NASA]

[5] 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.

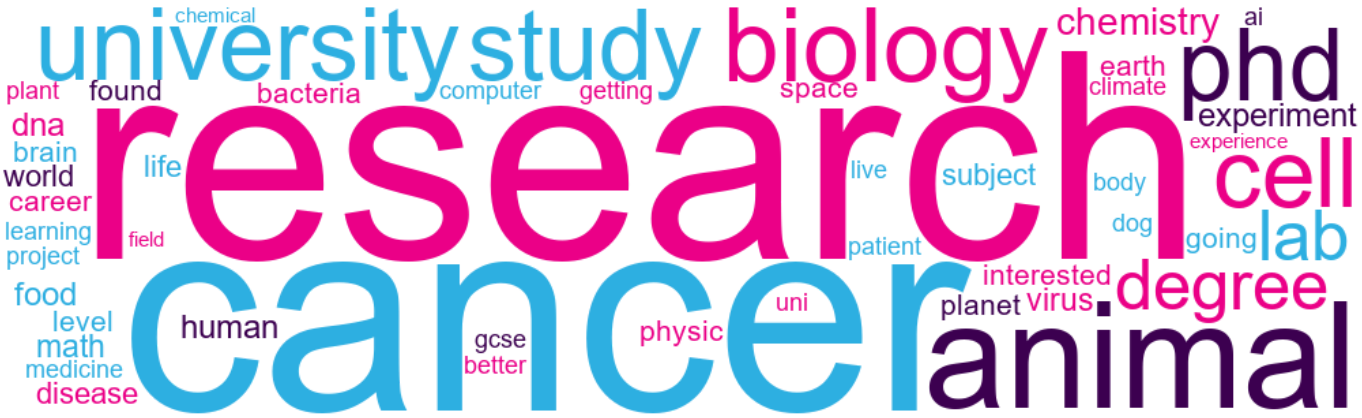
[6] Schools more than 30 minutes from their nearest major research HEI are half as likely to receive a visit from a scientist as those within 15 minutes travel time. State schools more than 30 minutes from a HEI are priority distant schools. See: about.imascientist.org.uk/2017/school-engagement-in-stem-enrichment-effect-of-school-location/

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

Chats

Discussion topics in chats

Common topics in chats attended by The Genetics Society funded participants



Examples of good engagement

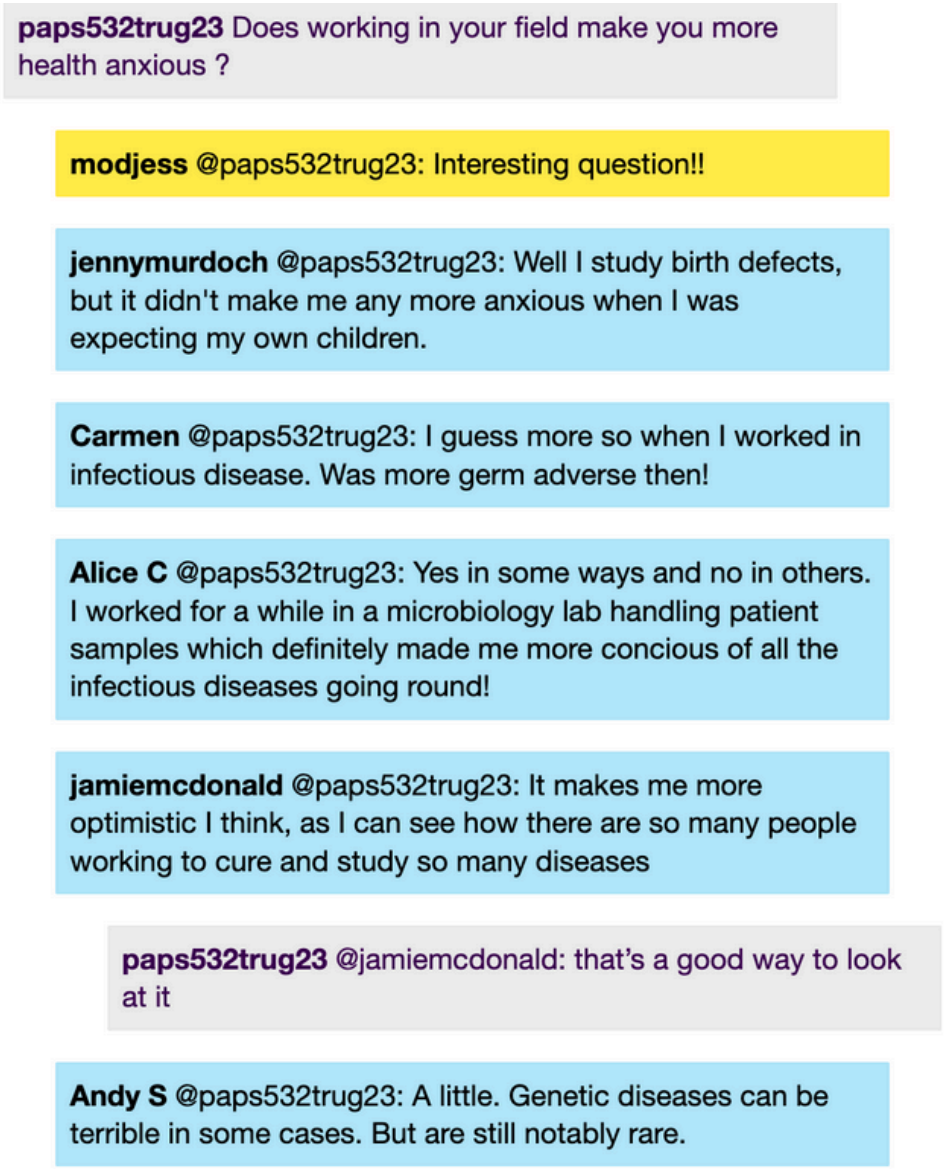
In this exchange, a student asked about Huntington's disease. The scientist explained how the condition affects the brain and outlined its key symptoms, providing insight into the genetic basis of the disease.

arco532hero2 @jamiemcdonald hello how are you i see you research brains, may i ask, what is Huntingtons disease

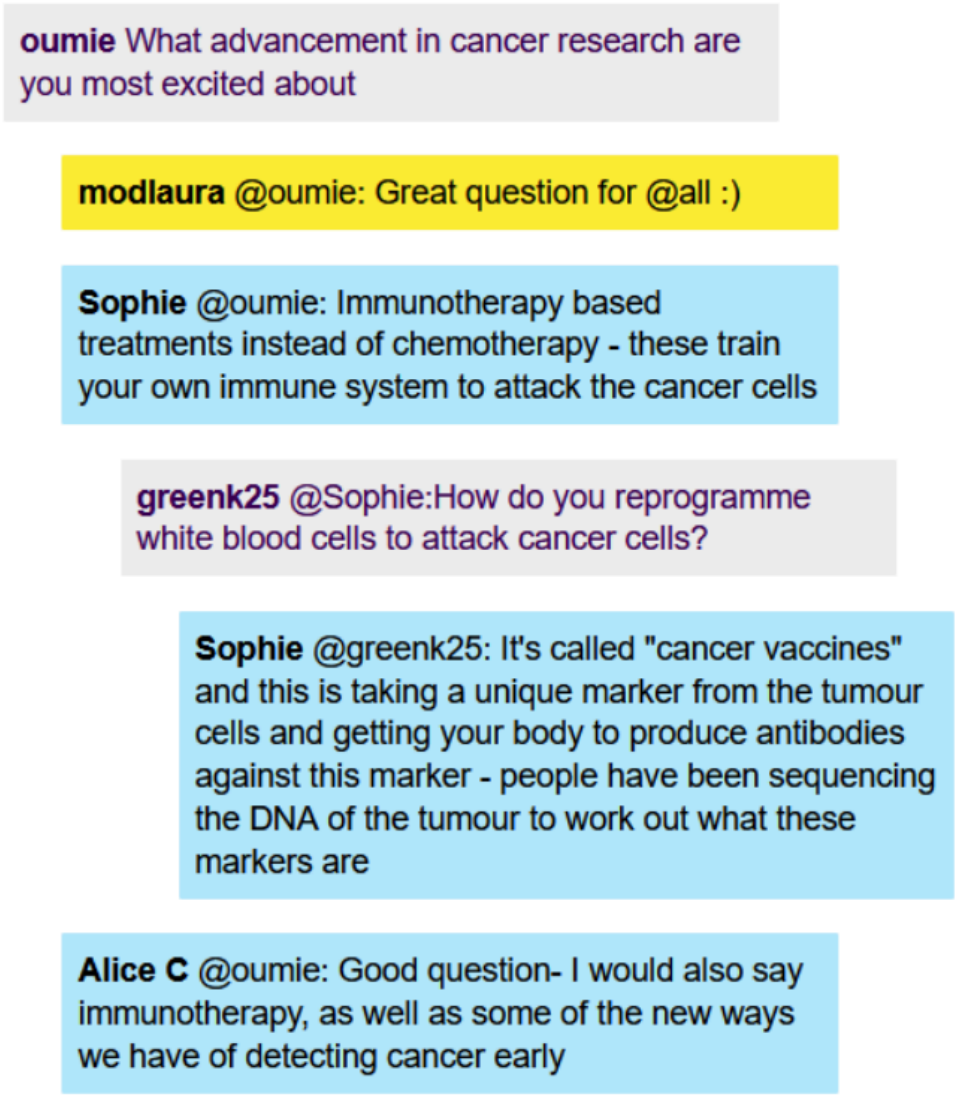
jamiemcdonald @arco532hero2: Huntington's disease is a brain disease that causes the brain to stop working as normal, so people get symptoms like shaking and uncontrollable movements as well as forgetfulness and emotional difficulties. It affects daily life of patients

arco532hero2 @jamiemcdonald: thank you, very interesting

In this exchange, a student asked whether working in the field makes scientists more health-anxious. The scientists reflected on the personal impact of their work: one noted that in some ways it does and in other ways it doesn't, explaining that they are more conscious of infectious diseases circulating in the community. Another described feeling more optimistic, seeing firsthand the progress being made toward cures.



In this chat, a student asked the scientists about the advances in cancer research that excite them most, and follows up to ask about reprogramming white blood cells to target cancer cells. The scientists explained current approaches in immunotherapy and gene-based treatments. This conversation offered students insight into current research, showing how fundamental science translates into real-world medical applications.



Feedback

Taking part has a positive impact on scientists[8]

- 70% reported increased skills communicating with lay audiences
- 67% reported increases in confidence in, and 63% in enthusiasm for communicating with lay audiences
- 68% reported increased interest in future public engagement activities

96% of scientists and 94% of teachers would recommend the activity[8]

Taking part supports students' science capital and provides opportunities for whole class engagement[8]

- 89% of teachers report the activity to be 'extremely' or 'very effective' for developing awareness of STEM careers
- 86% found it effective for challenging stereotypes about STEM professionals
- 84% found the activity effective for helping students see how STEM relates to the world around them
- 82% found the activity effective for improving students' confidence in asking questions about STEM

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!

Participant

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

Participant

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, Teacher

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

Teacher

Detailed evaluation of scientist and teacher feedback received across the *I'm a... Programme* throughout 2025 is published in the ***2025/26 Autumn Term Summary Report***:

about.imascientist.org.uk/2026/summary-report-autumn25

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[8] Based on survey responses from participants across the *I'm a... Programme* including participants funded by The Genetics Society and other partners.