

Making a Difference:

The Impact of Aimhigher

ACE, taster and other aspiration-raising activity

ACE, taster and other aspiration-raising activity

This booklet is one in a series of ten, produced by partnerships involved in Aimhigher activities and collated by Action on Access. The case studies provided are illustrative of an extensive and wide-ranging set of Aimhigher activities delivered across England.

Other publications in this series include:

Progression to HE from vocational, WBL + WRL
Masterclasses and other attainment-raising activity
Summer Schools
Engagement of parents and carers
Mentoring, Ambassadors and Student Associates
Dissemination of practice
Work with specific Widening Participation target groups
Work with communities and outreach activities
Work with all pre-KS4 pupils, including primary

 Electronic versions of the above publications are available for download from our website:

www.actiononaccess.org

Contents

ACE, taster and other aspiration-raising activity

Introduction	2
University taster programme: Saturday Schools, London Borough of Waltham Forest Aimhigher London North Partnership	4
Making a Difference in Humber: HE4U - Aspiration Raising Aimhigher The Humber	6
Maths tasters and masterclasses Aimhigher Derbyshire	8
Oxbridge Students into Schools Aimhigher County Durham	10
Aiming Higher through Drama and Performance in Cumbria Aimhigher Cumbria	12
Aimhigher in schools and colleges: Years 10-13 The LIFE partnership: Aimhigher South West region	14
Vocational taster day at Colchester Institute Aimhigher Essex	16
Science Olympics Aimhigher Greater Merseyside	18
Working Degrees taster evening London West Aimhigher Partnership	20
HE/FE awareness Aimhigher Birmingham and Solihull	22
Aspiration-raising in schools Aimhigher Kent & Medway	24
Aspiration-raising using Mood Boards Aimhigher Lincolnshire and Rutland	27
'Passport to University' – an aspiration-raising activity day for Year 7 pupils Aimhigher West Yorkshire	29
University of Cambridge Aimhigher Days Aimhigher Cambridgeshire and Peterborough	31
Oxford Women's Training Scheme – Technology Taster and HE Bridging Programme Aimhigher Milton Keynes Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire	33
Sports Fairs, a taster activity London Aimhigher Sports Partnership	34
Raising aspirations through progressive interventions The Peninsula partnership: Aimhigher South West region	36
Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Access Regional Scheme (STARS) - at Belgrave High School, Tamworth, Staffordshire Aimhigher Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent	38
High School Co-ordinators and Student Advocates Aimhigher Northumberland	40
Community Pathways into HE: Beyond GCSE? - University of Leeds Aimhigher West Yorkshire	43

Introduction

ACE, taster and other aspiration-raising activity

The case studies in this booklet show the different ways Aimhigher projects and activities have impacted on people's lives by creating exciting opportunities which operate in every local education authority in England.

Aimhigher aims to widen and deepen participation in higher education to help create a higher education system that includes all who can benefit from it – particularly those who might not view learning as an option, or perhaps face social, cultural, economic, or institutional barriers. Aimhigher particularly seeks to redress under-participation in higher education by lower social class groups and by vocational students. These aims continue to be an important government priority.

Aimhigher is an excellent example of partnerships bringing together schools, further education colleges, higher education institutions, employers, the skills sector, and others to focus on the core objectives; helping to raise attainment and aspiration and improving progression opportunities.

Aimhigher began in August 2004 and builds on existing widening participation programmes. It is still early days and it will be some time before targets of increases in the numbers participating in higher education can be shown to have been achieved. This booklet demonstrates some of the early impact of the Aimhigher programme.

The term ACE Days is used to describe a variety of different activities where young people have an organised, facilitated, experience of post-16 education in further or higher education institutions. For some young people one of the perceived barriers to progressing onto a further or higher education course is distrust, misunderstanding or even a fear of the unknown about these institutions. Sometimes it is a deeper perception or fear that it is "not for them".

ACE days, taster days and other activities are events where young people have the opportunity to get a real life understanding of the further or higher education experience, or a particular academic subject or experience. The analysis by Aimhigher practitioners demonstrates that they contribute to reducing possible misconceptions and raising interest and aspiration.

The criteria for a partnership case study to be included in this booklet were observation of practice, analysis of partnership plans and successful progress in reaching targets by the end of the first year of the programme.

The case studies chosen reflect the range of activities undertaken – they are therefore illustrative but do highlight a number of key features which already show the difference Aimhigher is making.

They demonstrate the range of under-represented groups in HE who are involved in activities to find out about the possibilities for them in HE. They show the importance of working with different sectors and groups in partnership to address the range of barriers faced by people who have no experience of HE and who are socially disadvantaged in our society. They also demonstrate how in a very short period of time partnerships have got up and running and are delivering an extensive programme of work.

There are no claims to 'best practice', the term itself is problematic and is contested. However, the case studies are illustrative of the range of activities and processes that have been shown to add value in other countries. As the Aimhigher programme develops, evaluation results will come through¹ and it will be possible to have a fuller picture of the impact of the overall programme.

¹ The national evaluation programme started in May 2005. Early results will be available by December 2005.

University taster programme: Saturday Schools, London Borough of Waltham Forest

Aimhigher Area

London North Partnership

Contact details

Neil Larkin

Saturday Schools Co-ordinator

Aimhigher London North

0208 496 5894

Neil.Larkin@edu.lbwf.gov.uk

lead teachers from
Waltham Forest
working in
collaboration with
university staff from
Queen Mary
University of London
and the University of
East London

Background and context

The series of Saturday classes was designed to give pupils an insight into life at university – and a glimpse into their own potential futures. The curriculum for the taster sessions was designed by lead teachers from Waltham Forest working in collaboration with university staff from Queen Mary University of London and the University of East London (UEL) to develop the short courses at an appropriate level. The key aim of the programme was to introduce students to university level study by giving them a wide range of subject areas to experience whilst not withdrawing them from the school timetable.

Description of the activity

This programme involved 16 participating schools in the Waltham Forest area. Each of the schools sent two pupils per Year 10 class. The two and a half hour taster sessions took place on Saturday mornings, ran consecutively for four weeks, commencing in late February 2005. Pupils were taken to the Universities on coaches provided.

The 200 students that visited Queen Mary University had the opportunity to attend sessions in:

- Physics
- Biology
- Maths
- English
- History
- Languages
- or Geography.

The 100 that attended UEL were offered:

- Sports Science
- ICT
- Media Studies
- Psychology
- or Fashion.

A key factor was that pupils were not withdrawn from school lessons to attend these sessions, thus were not left behind in school subjects.

How the activity made a difference

Feedback from these sessions was excellent. Aimhigher Co-ordinator, Neil Larkin, commented 'the classes seem to have been very successful again this year with very positive feedback from students, teachers and parents'. At the University of East London, Widening Participation Officer Yasmin Ashgar commented 'the young people from Waltham Forest have shown that they have great potential: the university staff have been very impressed with their attitude and work. They have responded well to working in a more adult environment'. Pupils' awareness and aspirations toward higher education were raised by the project.

'the young people
from Waltham Forest
have shown that they
have great potential'

This partnership ensured that the content of the sessions was pitched at the right level



Subsequent or ongoing work

Aspects of this activity that were particularly successful included the collaboration between teachers in Waltham Forest and the University staff running these sessions. This partnership ensured that the content of the sessions was pitched at the right level for the attending students, and that they were challenged appropriately.

Waltham Forest has a number of firmly established Aimhigher programmes that these students will experience in future years, building on the awareness, aspiration and achievement-raising work commenced in this programme.

Making a Difference in Humber: HE4U - Aspiration Raising

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Humber

Contact details

Lisa Hanson-Dows

Curriculum Consultant

Connexions Humber

01472 355303

lhansondows@connexions

humber.com

HE4U is an aspiration-raising project designed for use with large groups of year 9 pupils

84% said they were more interested in finding out about Higher Education than before taking part in HE4U

"University can be fun, there are lots of courses to do in college and university"

Background and context

The Humber region, which includes Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire, has a lower than national average participation rate for young people into Higher Education (HE). The aim of HE4U was to demystify the perception of HE for potential students, and lead to a rise in application numbers. The pupils who benefited from HE4U were Year 9 students, many of whom were from postcode areas which are not currently well-represented in HE. A significant number of these pupils had no family background of Higher Education, especially through the traditional post-18 route.

A project delivery team was brought together comprising an Aimhigher facilitator, University of Lincoln widening participation officers, Connexions Curriculum Consultants, the Grimsby College WP officer and North East Lincolnshire Aimhigher pre-16 and 16-18 facilitators. Undergraduates from the University of Hull were also involved in the student group discussions and staff at East Coast Media delivered the video-making activity.

Description of the activity

- > HE4U is an aspiration-raising project designed for use with large groups of Year 9 pupils. The pupils attend a half-day HE4U event either at their school or at a nearby HE provider. The project includes various activities, for example 'HE jargon-busting', in which students have to match HE jargon to their description, or art collages, in which the pupils design a collage of what they think goes on inside the mind of a student (using undergraduate prospectuses), which they then present to other students. One venue offers pupils the opportunity to produce a video, using group members in various production roles - lights, cameras, sounds – and as presenters and performers. The videos are given to the pupils to take back to their schools to show to other potential candidates.

How the activity made a difference

- > From March–July 04, 466 pupils from 8 schools took part in HE4U events, across North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire. Out of 363 evaluation forms received 84% said they were more interested in finding out about Higher Education than before taking part in HE4U. Interestingly, the number of pupils who said their parents had not gone into HE at 18 made up of 61% of the respondents. Another 14% of respondents did not know whether their parents had gone into HE at 18.

The pupils gained a diverse range of information from the HE4U activities. One pupil noted that she realised "University can be fun, there are lots of courses to do in college and university and that university can help [you] a lot in [your] future life". Another pupil said they learnt "what a sandwich course is and what UCAS is".

For some pupils HE4U gave them the opportunity to find out things which are sometimes not in the guidance books, such as issues around student accommodation, cleaning and pets. Through interviewing current undergraduates in informal discussion fora, they also managed to dispel some misconceptions about students, that they are all 'hippies' or may be subject to bullying.

Subsequent or ongoing work

The project is continuing through 2004-05 and 2005-06. During 2004-05 three schools from the East Riding and Hull have participated in HE4U events and five more North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire schools have been allocated dates. Other schools are looking at scheduling HE4U after the Year 9 SATS. The project leader has drawn undergraduate assistants from another successful Aimhigher project, enlisting undergraduate mentors through a Study Buddy scheme to facilitate the question and answer discussion groups during HE4U.

Maths tasters and masterclasses

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Derbyshire

Contact details

Marianne Sparrow

Aimhigher Derbyshire

Development Co-ordinator

M.Sparrow@derby.ac.uk

Tilly Warden

Advanced Skills Teacher

West Park Community School

01332 662337

The aim was to help young people with real potential to understand how they can make the most of that potential

The Head teacher felt that the visit contributed so much to the general motivation of the pupils that it has been repeated with current Year 9 pupils

Background and context

This work was developed at the West Park Community School (an EAZ school) near Derby, which is in the process of applying for special status in Maths and eager to work on a Maths-related curriculum, and one of the high level targets for Aimhigher Derbyshire is to work with schools to raise attainment at Key Stage 4. Many pupils with ability or talents in arts and humanities many not gain a grade C in GCSE in Maths creating a potential barrier to entry to HE as entrance requirements to university often require GCSE in both English and Maths.

Description of the activity

Following the Year 9 national Aimhigher Road Show, the Year 9 cohort visited the University of Leicester Mathematics Department. This involved a series of Maths challenges, a talk on what mathematicians do and a tour of the campus led by undergraduates.

Some of the workshops were led by Maths specialists from the universities of Derby and Keele - and four Maths undergraduates worked with the pupils on problem-solving exercises. The aim was to help young people with real potential to understand how they can make the most of that potential.

The second activity, a two-day motivating Maths residential, took place during autumn half term, specially tailored to meet the interests and needs of thirteen Year 9 pupils. The pupils had been chosen for particular ability in Maths, identified through their results in the national Maths Challenge set by the UK Mathematics trust and based at the University of Leeds. Only 40% of participants achieve either a gold, silver, or bronze certificate. These pupils all attained gold or silver, which is an excellent performance for their age.

How the activity made a difference

The Maths professor who led the sessions at West Park School commented that the pupils showed an unusual level of enthusiasm for the tasks set. The pupils responded very well to this new environment and many who had previously not considered University are now keen to do so.

The Head Teacher felt that the visit contributed so much to the general motivation of the pupils that it has been repeated with current Year 9 pupils, and is now a core element of the Aimhigher programme.

On the residential the pupils had the opportunity to learn more about studying Maths at university and the career paths that might follow. In a pre-residential survey the pupils stated that they were not sure if they had the potential for university or if they were interested in going to higher education at all. After the residential their attitudes and views had completely changed and all of them are now very positive about going to university in the future.

The school is very positive about the Aimhigher Maths workshops and is now encouraging its staff to take part in a countywide Maths project detailed below.

The major spin-off from arranging the residential has been the collaboration of Maths staff from the school, the universities and the Aimhigher team to identify future projects

The University lecturers have been so inspired by working with pupils of this age group that they are now producing a DVD to promote Maths careers

Subsequent or ongoing work

- > The major spin-off from arranging the residential has been the collaboration of Maths staff from the school, the universities and the Aimhigher team to identify future projects already in development where similar collaboration would provide benefits. The objectives now are to target pupils whose grade in Maths may prevent progression to university in the future and to develop workshop materials to deliver a series of revision masterclasses for Year 11 pupils. Many of the target group do not consider progression to post 16-education because they are weak in this core subject.

The staff will deliver the workshops next March. The materials being developed match the curriculum but will be delivered in a very interactive way by Advanced Skills Maths teachers and university Maths lecturers. This is one of the few occasions that staff from both the City of Derby and the county LEAs have worked together on a curriculum project.

The University of Derby will host the masterclasses and therefore involve Maths undergraduates as mentors and role models. The pupils will have a chance to look around the University of Derby and this will help to dispel any stereotypical myths they may have about university students or the range of possible courses.

The University lecturers have been so inspired by working with pupils of this age group that they are now producing a DVD to promote Maths careers. The DVD will show recent Maths graduates in a wide variety of occupations, illustrating just how many career opportunities there are.

Aimhigher Derbyshire is now beginning to work with other LEA staff to introduce the same model for pupils expected to gain 5 GCSEs grade A-C but who are weak in English. We are particularly keen to target boys in the English project as their underachievement has been identified nationally as a barrier to HE progression.

Oxbridge Students into Schools

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Tees Valley

Contact details

Angela Jorgenson

01325 376478

ajorgenson@qeliz.ac.uk

The activity enabled school students to meet Cambridge students and learn about the experience of being a student at a prestigious university.

>

Background and context

Darlington lies within the Tees Valley and sits on the boundaries of County Durham and North Yorkshire. It is a relatively compact borough with below-average levels of achievement at 16 and low progression rates into further education (FE) and higher education (HE) which are characteristic of urban areas in the North East. Recent research by Cambridge University has confirmed the low aspirations among some young people in Darlington and reluctance to build on educational achievement. The HE participation rate of young people in Darlington is currently at 25% which is well below the national average. Darlington was not originally identified as an Excellence Challenge Area but was fortunate to receive Aimhigher uplift funding in 2005.

An aspiration-raising activity aimed at Year 10 students and organised by Cambridge University was offered to all Tees Valley schools. The activity enabled school students to meet Cambridge students and learn about the experience of being a student at a prestigious university. Unfortunately the day offered to Darlington was the last day of the spring term and not convenient to schools for various reasons. Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College maintains good contact with old students and annually asks previous Oxbridge students back to talk to current sixth formers about their experience. This was an ideal opportunity to ask students returning to Darlington for the event to participate in something similar aimed at Year 10 students.

Description of the activity

The university students were initially contacted by email and asked if they would be willing to deliver 50 minute/one hour aspiration-raising sessions in schools. For those who expressed an interest, a meeting was arranged on the day of the sixth form activity.

This was a pilot and the students worked to very short timescales. They were briefed on the activity and given a format for delivery on the afternoon of one day, and delivered the activity in schools the next. The format used by the students was based on 'It's a Student's Life' presentation by Teesside University which was kindly offered to the project by the University. Taxis were employed to ferry the students across town from one school to another. The undergraduates, four Oxford University students and one Cambridge student were studying Law, Geography, and Engineering. Generally the more able Year 10 students were involved in these sessions and in total 90 students from four schools benefited from the activity.

Many thanks to the students involved, Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College and the schools participating in the activity.

How the activity made a difference

The activity was well received and all students participating stated that it had increased their knowledge of HE. All students stated that their interest in continuing to study and progressing on to HE had increased. 74% of all students stated that their interest in going to university had greatly increased. Comments from participating students included: -

'I think that this was really informative and made me look at universities in a different way.'

'The activity I think has convinced me that I want to go to university. I am going to look up courses in fashion and design'

in total 90 students from four schools benefited from the activity

>

'I found out a lot about fees and accommodation and it has cleared a lot of worry about expense. It has increased my ambitions to go and study music at university. I am happy to have participated.'

'Appealed to me as you were from the North.'

'It was interesting to learn about Oxford and Cambridge and raised my hopes of going to one of these universities.'

A teacher commented 'Very confident, interesting relaxed. I am sure that you have given our students some food for thought. It was great to see that you all came from local comprehensive schools. This helped to 'keep it real' for our students. Thanks'

Subsequent or ongoing work

The success of the activity was mainly due to the Oxbridge students' natural confidence and their ability to think on their feet. They modified the delivery when they realised that some groups needed a more interactive approach. The fact that the students were from the North and had attended local schools was appreciated by both students and staff. The evaluation proved that it was successful and worthwhile. This is an activity which will be repeated next year and hopefully more school students will be able to benefit.

**The evaluation proved >
that it was successful
and worthwhile**

Aiming Higher through Drama and Performance in Cumbria

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Cumbria

Contact details

Alison Backhouse

Aimhigher Administrator

01228 818136 ext 205

alison.backhouse@cumbria.ac.uk

Web address

www.ifonlyi.cumbria.ac.uk

Schools have been particularly interested in Aimhigher projects that fit comfortably alongside curriculum requirements and, as part of their coursework

students were briefed on the Aimhigher remit and they agreed to develop a play targeting Year 9 pupils prior to their options decisions

Background and context

The success of drama as a vehicle for critically examining issues and attitudes is well understood. It can inspire audiences and also raise the confidence, self-esteem and aspirations of the performers themselves.

Description of the activity

Aimhigher Cumbria has worked with small scale organisations, touring companies and with the higher education sector to provide a wide range of performance-related activities, including campus visits, masterclasses, workshops and issue-based performances, both in schools and at Summer Schools. In one instance, West Cumbrian pupils interested in performance and media studies worked with undergraduates in a TV studio set up in school for the day. They filmed 'live' interviews with staff and pupils around the school, set up mock studio interviews and recorded a news broadcast as their final product. One pupil remarked: 'it was the best day I have had in school, ever!'

Seeing the positive impact of these interventions, Aimhigher developed a more long-term project with Workington Sixth Form Centre's drama department. Schools have been particularly interested in Aimhigher projects that fit comfortably alongside curriculum requirements and, as part of their coursework, this department's 'A' level students were required to write and perform a short drama. At the end of Year 12, students were briefed on the Aimhigher remit and they agreed to develop a play targeting Year 9 pupils prior to their options decisions in the Spring term. The aim of the play was to raise aspirations and inform Year 9 pupils about the various study routes that were open to them. The sixth form tutor explained that 'A' level pupils often spent a lot of time agonising over a topic for their performance, but the Aimhigher brief had provided an immediate focus and saved them much wasted effort.

The students consequently spent the Summer and the Autumn term researching and writing their drama. They spent quite some time getting to grips with educational terminology and the differences between, for example, NVQs, BTECs and HNDs. They often felt frustrated, but, in doing this, they reported that they 'learnt a lot', and developed a new understanding about the range of FE qualifications available and the different routes they provide into higher education. Since their target audiences were to be whole year groups from four schools, rather than selected pupils, they had to devise a play that would have something for everyone. Pupils were to be encouraged to 'aim higher', whatever their particular interests, or abilities, so this background research was essential to the success of their message.

However, the research was perhaps the least of their difficulties, since they next had to decide how they could dress all this up as an entertainment. Ingeniously, they developed the device of a virtual reality machine as a means by which they could compare educational opportunities available in the Fifties to those available today. Bringing their Fifties counterparts into the future, they transformed their characters' lives by placing them on a variety of educational pathways.

How the activity made a difference

The outcome was a huge success. Using comedy, song and dance, the students produced a thirty-minute performance that kept their audiences captivated – not easy with audience sizes sometimes approaching two hundred. Overall (and all in one day), they performed the play to five hundred pupils and one hundred parents, and had everyone clapping and singing along to their Aimhigher theme tune by the finale.

**a worthwhile and
informative message
to their Year 9 pupils**

- > Staff from all the participating schools were universally impressed by the quality of the performance and felt it had carried a worthwhile and informative message to their Year 9 pupils. The benefits of this project were multi-faceted, however. By engaging in this Aimhigher activity, the sixth form students, as well as developing a wealth of research and performance skills, had also enhanced their understanding of higher education, experienced in practical terms the value of drama as an educational tool, and vastly increased their confidence as writers and performers.

Aimhigher in schools and colleges: Years 10-13

Aimhigher Area

The LIFE partnership:
South West region

Contact details

Stella Lees
01202 962799
slees@bournemouth.ac.uk

Background and context

In the predominantly rural area of Dorset, south Somerset and south Wiltshire, too many capable students do not progress to FE/HE, even though many of them have achieved more than five A*-C GCSEs. The Aimhigher aspiration-raising programme has been designed to encourage these students to consider progression beyond Year 11 and through to HE.

The partnership includes 58 schools roughly half of which do not have a sixth form. Thirty three schools were selected for intensive activities based on an LSC analysis of their attainment of 5 A*-C GCSEs, eligibility for free school meals, ward participation in HE and a rurality factor (distance from nearest HE provider). The Aimhigher team offers a more limited programme of support to the remaining 25 schools.

Within the targeted schools, pupils who meet one of the following criteria take part in the Aimhigher programme, that is those:

- From clerical, administrative or manual backgrounds;
- First generation and with no family experience of Higher Education;
- Who come from families dependent on benefits e.g. eligible for Free School Meals, unemployed parents or carers etc;
- Who come from under-represented minority ethnic groups;
- Who live in coastal/rural areas; and
- Who have the potential to progress and succeed in Higher Education but have low aspirations, motivation, awareness or support.

Description of the activity

The Aimhigher team has developed a progressive programme of activities appropriate for each year group



The Aimhigher team has developed a progressive programme of activities appropriate for each year group. In Year 9, pupils come onto the HE campus for an activity-based day to raise aspirations and lay the foundations for the subsequent programme.

In Year 10, the focus is on raising aspirations through talks by student ambassadors in Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) sessions and raising attainment through curriculum-based activities. This is accompanied by a mentoring programme running in five targeted schools, with one-to-one mentoring taking place on a weekly basis. There are 29 mentors and 116 mentees. The majority of mentees are Year 10 students with current predicted GCSE D grades. The mentors offer support and encouragement to these pupils to help improve their attainment. This is the first year that the scheme has operated but feedback from the mentors, mentees and the school mentor co-ordinators is very positive.

For Year 11 students, the programme continues with aspiration- and attainment-raising and building up information and awareness of progression routes, degree subjects and the HE environment. GCSE-linked study activities are provided as required by the school, for example coursework support and revision techniques.

GCSE-linked study activities are provided as required by the school, for example coursework support and revision techniques



In Year 12, the programme offers further support with researching courses and places to study, the importance of Open Days, the UCAS procedure and deadlines, help with completing their UCAS application form and personal statement. Finance and student life talks can be delivered by trained student ambassadors.

All participating students complete a "Connexions Consent Form", so that Connexions can track their progress for Aimhigher

- > All participating students complete a "Connexions Consent Form", so that Connexions can track their progress for Aimhigher.

How the activity made a difference

In 2003/4, 148 Year 10 students from 11 schools took part in Aimhigher taster days through the LIFE programme. The students were asked about their plans for going to university both before and after they took part in the session. 81 per cent of those who had not previously wanted to go to HE changed their mind as a result of the Aimhigher taster day.

Teachers have reported that the PSHE sessions delivered in schools by HE Student Ambassadors has enthused their students

- > Teachers have reported that the PSHE sessions delivered in schools by HE Student Ambassadors have enthused their students, who enjoy meeting and engaging with HE students. On evaluation forms students' comments included:

"Today's talk was amazing and I've definitely changed my mind"

"I enjoyed the talk and it has grabbed me to go to uni"

"Today's visit has really helped me understand uni"

"Come again!"

Subsequent or ongoing work

The range of Aimhigher activities delivered is flexible and demand-led. The LIFE programme responds to the request of the school for each activity. A vital element in the success of the activity is the "role model" of the Student Ambassadors and Mentors and the relevance of their experiences to younger students.

Subsequent work will be done by Connexions in tracking the progress of all students who have taken part in Aimhigher initiatives. This information will be used to measure the effectiveness of the Aimhigher initiatives.

Vocational taster day at Colchester Institute

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Essex

Contact details

Schools Liaison Officer

Colchester Institute

01206 518609

marketing@colchester.ac.uk

Background and context

Tendring is an area of very low participation rates in both further education (FE) and higher education (HE). The forty-five students targeted for these activities were those from the Tendring area who have the potential to enter HE, but do not come from families with a history of HE. Year 11 students were targeted from The Harwich School, Clacton County High School and Colbayns High School.

Often the full breadth of vocational training is not recognised by schools and school students. This taster activity aimed to inform students about the range of post-16 vocational opportunities available and to demonstrate a range of routes of progression into HE.

Description of the activity

The students were brought to Colchester Institute and split into mixed school groups at the beginning of the day. Each group rotated around three different vocational taster activities within these centres, each lasted around an hour:

Music and Performing Arts. The students toured the facilities and found out about the types of courses on offer and career opportunities. Current music students were on hand to answer questions about the courses and to talk about student life at the college. The visitors were then treated to a range of musical performances from the current students.

Health and Care. The students were based in the occupational therapy suite and were given an introduction to the role of an Occupational Therapist. Students tried to make jam sandwiches with one hand to see how tricky a simple activity can be for those with physical disabilities. They were then shown various solutions which can help enormously with everyday tasks, such as a gadget which holds a loaf of bread straight making it easier to slice.

They experienced an Art Therapy session and were asked to paint how they felt when they woke up that morning and were quite surprised with the results. They also split into pairs and tasked with getting around the department in a wheelchair, one student seated, the other as helper. The students were amazed at how difficult it can be to get through doors.

Hospitality and Food Studies. This session took place within the purpose-built building and students took part in an interactive demonstration from one of the college chefs. They learned how to joint a chicken and fillet a salmon. They discussed the types of food they enjoy and the kinds of meals they eat. They took part in a spice quiz where they were given a variety of spices to smell and taste and were asked to name them. They were shown the different countries around the world in which some of college's ex-students work. Finally careers in hospitality and catering were discussed, whilst a stir-fry was prepared for the visitors to enjoy. One student commented: "I liked the chef man best - I didn't know you could work all over the world"

Engineering. This session took place in the welding workshop where students learned about different types of engineering and why engineering, and welding in particular, is important. Selected students from the group 'had a go' at MIG welding and were surprised to learn that it is "much more difficult than it looks".

Many thanks are due to all the schools involved, and the centres and staff at Colchester Institute.

Current music students were on hand to answer questions about the courses and to talk about student life at the college

"I liked the chef man best - I didn't know you could work all over the world"

use of current vocational course students as ambassadors was particularly successful

These sessions also raised awareness amongst school staff of the range of vocational courses available

How the activity made a difference

These activities raised awareness of the vocational opportunities on offer and of vocational higher education. The visitors learned that students on vocational courses are often very focused on a career path post-16 and many will move onto vocational HE courses such as foundation degrees. The experience of current students demonstrated different routes of progression.

Careers such as those in Health and Care and Engineering were explored, and many students did not know prior to the event what possibilities were available in these fields or anything much about them. These sessions also raised awareness amongst school staff of the range of vocational courses available, the facilities available in mixed colleges and also of routes of progression.

Subsequent or ongoing work

The use of current vocational course students as ambassadors was particularly successful and will be a feature of future events. The most popular activities were those that required practical involvement, e.g. health and care, and the chef's demonstration.

Science Olympics

Aimhigher Area

Greater Merseyside Aimhigher

Contact details

Margaret Evans

Aimhigher Sefton

margaretj.evans@csf.sefton.gov.uk

Ioanna Norris

Aimhigher Wirral

ioannanorris@wirral.gov.uk

Background and context

The Science Olympics is designed to raise aspirations and encourage interest in science, especially Physics. It targets Year 10 pupils from identified Aimhigher cohorts, particularly those with no background of higher education.

It is also seen as an opportunity for teachers to take part in the activities and meet up with teachers from other schools to share ideas. The event has been running for 2 years so is now in its third year.

Description of the activity

The Science Olympics is held at the Chadwick Laboratory at the University of Liverpool. Each of the Greater Merseyside LEAs takes part in the event, with a different day for each LEA. Every school is invited to send a team of 4 Year 10 pupils to the University of Liverpool to take part in the first round of this competition which takes place on a Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. A member of staff, usually their Science teacher, accompanies each team.

The teams, including their teachers, take part in several activities including:

- Electromagnetic Madness – making an electromagnet which can attract a number of paperclips
- Building a spaghetti tower which can support an egg
- Building a bridge from wooden blocks
- Sweet Trader which involves quick thinking calculations.
- The final event involves teams from each LEA competing against each other in a different set of challenges.

Teams are awarded points for each activity and the 2 winning teams are invited to take part in a final event later on in the year. The winning team receives the Challenge Cup to take back to their school.

The event is organised by postgraduate students with undergraduates assisting and acting as positive role models.

How the activity made a difference

The Science Olympics > involves approximately 200 young people each year plus their teachers

The Science Olympics involves approximately 200 young people each year plus their teachers. Most of these young people have not been to a science department in a university before and they are amazed by the size of the laboratories and the equipment. The aspirations of the pupils are raised (see quotes) as in many cases is their self-esteem as they have been chosen to represent their schools.

Teachers' comments include:

'A good idea to use activities that are not well covered in the syllabus e.g. Balancing structures / spaghetti tower (engineering).'

'I really enjoyed it, as > did the pupils'

'I really enjoyed it, as did the pupils.'

'Tasks well managed and focused on teamwork.'

'Very good venue.'

'well planned and interesting. The challenges were fun and got us working together as a team'

- Pupils' comments:
- 'I thought it was mentally challenging yet fun at the same time. It made me think of a different way towards physics in life.'
- > 'I think the Science Olympics were well planned and interesting. The challenges were fun and got us working together as a team. They also got my brain working which is difficult on a Saturday.'
- 'I would enjoy Olympics in other subjects.'

Last year's winner was Bootle High School (Sefton). The team was composed of 4 boys, plus a reserve who took part in the final. No one in their families had been to university. The boys were awarded certificates and received the Challenge Cup at their school Awards Evening. Three of the boys are going on to a Sixth Form College to study science A-levels and the other two boys are going to an FE college to study mechanics. Their comments include:

'I'm glad I went to the Science Olympics as it opened my mind to going to university'

- > 'I'm glad I went to the Science Olympics as it opened my mind to going to university. It was a wonderful experience, which I will always remember.'
- 'I felt it was a real achievement when we won the competition. It was also a good chance to look around the university that it was held in (Liverpool) and helped me to decide that I want to go to university.'
- 'It made me consider a career in engineering.'
- 'I felt that I was an important person when I went on the Aimhigher Science Olympics because there was only four people picked to go'
- The trip to the Science Olympics gave me a new insight of a university.'

Subsequent or ongoing work

We intend to do the Science Olympics as an annual event but would like to open it up to other geographical areas. We are also considering organising similar events in different subject areas.

We also have some international links with the USA and the Netherlands and are exploring the possibility of an international event.

Working Degrees taster evening

Aimhigher Area

London West Aimhigher Partnership

Contact details

Madeleine King and Jehan Khan

London West Aimhigher
020 8231 0197/2460

Madeleine.king@tvu.ac.uk
Jehan.khan@tvu.ac.uk

The Working Degrees event was an initial response to further promoting work-based learning opportunities

a hands-on session on some of the courses on offer, particularly the IT related ones such as Computer Engineering and Multi-Media

Background and context

The need to promote more work-based learning and vocational pathways is a high priority for London West Aimhigher. Following a comprehensive research exercise last year focusing on London West, and the subsequent production of a report entitled The Progression of Advanced Apprentices into Higher Education which was circulated nationally, it was decided by the Aimhigher Area Steering Group to develop a strand specifically dedicated to promoting vocational courses and pathways in the region. The Working Degrees event was an initial response to further promoting work-based learning opportunities in the London West area.

In the light of the movement of students and employed people in London, the event was promoted across the City through the following publications:

- Metro
- Evening Standard
- Harrow Observer
- Ealing Gazette & Informer
- Independent

It was important to extensively promote the event in order to target adults and other student cohorts that may have previously never utilised Aimhigher opportunities.

Description of the activity

The Foundation Degree taster day consisted of an open evening where students gained additional information about the different types of vocational courses available in the London West region. Many visitors had the opportunity to have a hands-on session on some of the courses on offer, particularly the IT related ones such as Computer Engineering and Multi-Media.

The event took place at the Ealing City Learning Centre in Acton, West London. This was a state-of-the-art building providing the very latest in IT facilities. It was available at no cost to partnership as it is jointly funded by Ealing LEA and a consortium of local schools, with a view to providing a facility for local partners that promotes a variety of e-learning opportunities in the region.

Some of the institutions that participated, and the types of vocational courses promoted are as follows:

- West Thames College: Business & Professional Administration, Early Years, E-Business Network Specialist
- Uxbridge College: Care Management, Information Computer Technology
- College of North West London: Construction & Building Services, Computer Engineering
- Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College: Travel & Tourism, Business & Management, Hospitality Business Management, Computing with Business, Computer Networking, Digital Animation (Multi Media)
- Thames Valley University: Management, Hospitality & Management, Music Technology

due to the flexible nature of the event students had the opportunity of sampling a variety of subjects



Many students initially decided to attend the evening as they were interested in a particular course however due to the flexible nature of the event students had the opportunity of sampling a variety of subjects. One student in particular commented that they had attended a number of related events, but the information provided at this session was the most helpful and comprehensive.

A representative from Foundation Degree Forward also attended and complimented the wide range of opportunities presented at the evening.

How the activity made a difference

Fifty members of the public attended the event and nearly all were adults. Historically, the emphasis of Aimhigher has been on targeting younger students, and so this was a significant development.

Many tutors confirmed they would be interviewing some of the participants, namely those students that now wanted to enrol onto some of the foundation degrees being promoted



In terms of making a difference, all those that attended the event registered their personal details with the appropriate educational institutions. Many tutors confirmed they would be interviewing some of the participants, namely those students that now wanted to enrol onto some of the foundation degrees being promoted. Without the evening, and more specifically the hands-on experience for attendees, it is unlikely they would have been able to make such informed decisions.

Subsequent or ongoing work

The Working Degrees evening significantly raised the profile of work-based learning opportunities and vocational pathways in the region. To maintain this momentum, London West Aimhigher will continue to work closely with London West Learning and Skills Council over the coming year. We have a Retail Apprenticeship Summer School planned for the Autumn of 2005, working with CRAC. The latter will also run an Insight into Apprenticeship day later this year, highlighting potential pathways in subjects such as construction, plumbing, engineering, etc.

HE/FE awareness

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Birmingham and Solihull

Contact details

Asif Iqbal

Aimhigher Programme Officer

Matthew Boulton College

aiqbal@matthew-boulton.ac.uk

Background and context

In Birmingham and Solihull, schools have been identified with progression rates of less than 24% and intensive sustained activity planned spanning a number of weeks. The students have had an FE/HE awareness programme involving activity over a 6-week period.

Description of the activity

Last year Aston University, UCE, Matthew Boulton College and The International School and Community College, Tile Cross, were engaged in an innovatory project under the Partnership for Progression banner.

The project involved groups of Year 10 pupils from the school in a programme of activities on campus that would enable the pupils to gain a greater awareness and a long-lasting experience of university and college life.

Partner institutions worked together to devise a structured programme of activities with particular emphasis on interaction with university students. The programmes at Aston and UCE were delivered on Wednesday afternoons over a six-week period. University student ambassadors forged effective relationships with the pupils throughout their sessions.

Activities ranged from campus tours, team-building and presentation exercises, as well as pupils experiencing subject/vocational tasters held at UCE and Matthew Boulton. One example of the enjoyable and successful activities was a team-building exercise called 'Eggs can fly' held at Aston University. Pupils were split into groups with their corresponding student ambassadors and were told to build parachutes which would be thrown over a balcony carrying hard-boiled eggs. Another successful and engaging activity held at UCE was a video and radio production session, in which pupils had to produce a short video and a radio advert.

Towards the end of the programmes at Aston and UCE there were sessions on developing a web page to illustrate what the pupils had learnt in the previous weeks and also in designing a poster that would encourage young people to apply to university.

Stan Bailey, EAZ Director for Shard End/Kitts Green commented "the feedback from the groups of Year 10 pupils was extremely positive. Most encouraging, they were particularly complimentary about the student ambassadors who undertook the role of guides/friends. The project was clearly a success. I believe the project has been a life-changing experience for all the young people involved".

How the activity made a difference

93 Year 10 pupils from the International School attended the programme and 50 pupils the MBC events. Evaluation to date has focused on feedback from pupils visiting Aston and UCE. The evaluation for MBC has not yet been conducted. Most pupils completed a questionnaire either progressively throughout the programme or a pre- and post-programme questionnaire. Some pupils also gave feedback in a small group to student ambassadors.

Aston - Cohort 1 (Nov – Dec 03): 4 groups of pupils feeding back to a student ambassador (week 1); 25 pupil questionnaires (week 3); 5 groups (week 5).

"I believe the project has been a life-changing experience for all the young people involved"

Aston - Cohort 2 (Jan – Feb 04): 17 pupil questionnaires (week 1); 15 pupil questionnaires (week 6).

UCE - Cohort 1 (Feb – March): 24 pre-event and 17 post-event questionnaires.

UCE - Cohort 2 (April – May): 17 pre-event and 14 post-event questionnaires.

The experience clearly influenced the pupils' perceptions of university and of university students

> There was overwhelming evidence that the programme achieved its aims. The experience clearly influenced the pupils' perceptions of university and of university students.

- 85% of pupils indicated that they had changed their view of university and university life.
- 50% of the pupils indicated that they had changed their views about university students.

Illustrative Pupil Quotes:

'I expected it to be a lot more study but it is not, it's more fun'

'I expected it to be really strict and full of posh people'

'There were loads more courses that I didn't think they had'

'I have completely changed my view on university and it looks a lot more fun'

'I have completely changed my view on university and it looks a lot more fun'

> 'I thought university students would be stuck up and arrogant'

Subsequent or ongoing work

Whilst the programme was effective in achieving its aims it was a very resource-intensive exercise for a small number of pupils. A 6-week programme was a big commitment for outreach staff and is not sustainable. The programme will be reviewed. It is likely that it will be reduced to a 3-week programme, retaining the focus on interactive, fun activities and meeting students. Also more FECs will be approached to take part as providers and recipients.

Aspiration-raising in schools

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Kent & Medway

Contact details

Louisa Boardman

Aimhigher Kent & Medway
Schools Project Officer

01843 609167

lb153@cant.ac.uk

The aim of the programme is to raise awareness of Higher Education (HE) to students from Year 9 through to Year 13

The in-school activity programme is carefully designed to provide appropriate aspiration-raising or information-giving sessions

Background and context

Aimhigher Kent & Medway has designed a detailed programme of in-school activities in consultation with school staff at Key Stages 3 and 4. The aim of the programme is to raise awareness of Higher Education (HE) to students from Year 9 through to Year 13. It has been designed so that general aspiration-raising work on 'what Higher Education is' starts in Year 9 and gradually leads to more specific information and practical advice in Years 12 and 13 on what courses to choose and getting the most out of the first term at university.

The programme is targeted at those schools where it is most likely to make an impact on:

- increasing attainment to reach average performance (based on Kent & Medway average GCSE performance)
- increasing retention rates at 16 years, increasing participation of Level 3 qualifications
- positively changing attitudes to going to college or university.

In consultation with schools district officers, the project decided to focus initially on schools with below-average GCSE performance, specifically those schools with 30-50% of pupils who achieve 5A*-C GCSEs. The main criteria used are:

- GCSE performance - schools with 30-50% of pupils achieving 5A*-C (DfES Performance Tables)
- free school meals – schools with high proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals (Kent County Council, Education)
- low-participation wards – schools that service a considerable number of pupils from Aimhigher Kent & Medway target wards, that is wards that historically have low HE participation (Aimhigher Kent & Medway Participation Study 2001).

Schools have been ranked according to the above criteria. The project team then selects schools to work with, depending on the availability of geographical resources. The school is approached and offered a menu of intervention activities to select from. If a school decides not to participate in these activities, we will offer the menu to the next school on the target list.

If a school does not meet the above criteria, the following resources are still available to them:

- Aimhigher Open Days across the various FE and HE institutions in Kent & Medway
- a range of Aimhigher literature promoting HE
- access to the Aimhigher web-site which will have some resource to help promote HE to pupils, for example a downloadable presentation on "Student Life at University".

Description of the activity

The in-school activity programme is carefully designed to provide appropriate aspiration-raising or information-giving sessions to students from Year 9 to Year 13. Aimhigher Kent & Medway believe that school staff members are best-placed to select students for intervention activities, and that it is important to tailor intervention to the needs of particular groups. However, to assist staff in this process and to ensure that there is reliability in the student selection process across the schools engaged with the project,

the following guidelines have been produced:

Year 9/10 students: little or no tradition of HE in family and/or lack of knowledge of HE; have not indicated an intention to enter HE; positive attitude to learning (e.g. willingness to commit to other activities); evaluation of performance at Key Stage 2 and other assessments indicate a potential to go onto HE.

Year 11 students: as above, plus formative performance in GCSE subjects.

Year 12/13 students: as above, plus student has indicated a career which will require HE level qualification; the ability to succeed in HE.

The activities cover a broad range of issues related to HE. Aimhigher Kent & Medway provides schools with a detailed explanation of the issues addressed in each activity and the learning outcomes to be expected. The following list of activity titles provides an indication of what is covered:

Year 9: 'What's in a job?' 'What's Higher Education really like?'

Year 10: 'HE: Just more school work?' 'HE: What's in it for me?'

Year 11: 'Looking beyond school'. 'A guide to summer school'.

Year 12: 'What's the best option for you?' 'More about student life'.

Year 13: 'Success at interview'. 'Getting the most out of your revision'. 'Making the most of your chances'. 'Student Finance: A survivor's guide'. 'Getting the most out of your first term at university'.

delivered by
Aimhigher sessional
promotion officers -
current or recently-
graduated university
students recruited
from across Kent



Each activity is 50 minutes in length so that it can be accommodated within the school timetable. They are delivered by Aimhigher sessional promotion officers - current or recently-graduated university students recruited from across Kent. They are chosen specifically for their presentation skills and possess the ability to relate their experience of HE to school students.

Sessional promotion officers have been provided with a structured lesson plan for each activity and have been coached on using the stock of Aimhigher materials available in a classroom environment. Crucially these young people are able to bring their recent experiences of HE to the role, enabling them to act as more effective 'role models'.

How the activity made a difference

Aimhigher Kent &
Medway is
undertaking detailed
tracking involving a
cohort study of 300
students



The impact of this programme will only be known in the longer term as participating students make decisions about whether they enter HE. Aimhigher Kent & Medway is undertaking detailed tracking involving a cohort study of 300 students who will be followed over time to compile information on educational and vocational outcomes.

Aimhigher Kent & Medway also monitors and evaluates each activity. This takes the form of a questionnaire that students and staff are asked to complete at the end of each activity where it is practical (time available and group size). It is clear from evaluations that activities in smaller groups are far more effective from both the student and the teacher perspective. Smaller groups are however more demanding on resources and there is an ongoing discussion between Aimhigher Kent & Medway and partner schools regarding the most effective way of delivering the programme.

A written summary of questionnaire responses for each activity is available on request from Aimhigher Kent & Medway. At the end of each school year the schools project officer provides the school with a written summary of the feedback from all the activities delivered in that period. This acts as the basis for discussion about ongoing collaboration

Subsequent or ongoing work

So far the programme > has delivered a total of 5800 student experiences.

So far the programme has delivered a total of 5800 student experiences. A further 77 presentations (reaching approximately 30 students each) are booked. The project will continue to take bookings through to July 2006.

Aspiration-raising using Mood Boards

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Lincolnshire
and Rutland

Contact details

Sue Knight

Project Manager for
Aimhigher Lincolnshire
and Rutland

01522 527347

sue.knight@bgc.ac.uk

Background and context

The aim of this activity was to adopt an innovative approach to raising aspirations to progress to higher education. The rationale adopted was to design an activity which would encourage students to think in some depth about their future and for this activity to be delivered by someone the students could identify with. A project worker was appointed who was a recent graduate and a practising artist. The work was piloted in the south of the county and involved collaboration and the building of partnerships in an area where there had been little previous Aimhigher activity.

The activity was targeted initially at Aimhigher students in schools and colleges, from Year 9 upwards, who were already showing an interest in the "artistic" aspects of the curriculum. The approach was well received and it soon became clear that there would be a need to expand the work to other parts of the two counties and to work with students in a wider range of curriculum areas.

Description of the activity

The activity started in January 2004, when a new project worker was recruited and based in Stamford College. The concept of "The Big Picture Workshop" was developed along with publicity brochures and presentations to teachers and lecturers. The workshops themselves lasted approximately an hour. An ice-breaker and introduction included some of the issues a student faces in thinking about their future and whether to consider HE. The activity itself used the environment of a creative workshop to encourage students to use the medium of collage and crayon to explore their aspirations. This starting point was followed by one-to-one chats which helped to link interests with future aspirations and career opportunities.

Lincolnshire and Rutland Aimhigher would like to thank the staff at Stamford College who helped in the pilot phase and the project worker Abigail Pooley.

How the activity made a difference

The workshops provided a vehicle for raising awareness of the many different higher education courses available. Both part-time and full-time routes were discussed as well as the range of study locations available. As an example, one student was interested in Art as a subject and Caring as a career and as a result of the workshop was able to investigate the area of Art Therapy.

The positive feedback from the questionnaires taken in the workshops is encouraging. Some of the comments from the students were:

'It was good being
able to express myself'

>

'It was good being able to express myself'
'Creative and Fun'

'Making mood boards helped me to collect ideas'

'It has shown me the
link in furthering my
education'

>

'It has shown me the link in furthering my education'
'A new way of discovering what I want to do'.

Subsequent or ongoing work

Following the pilot the activity was offered to other schools and colleges and adapted to appeal to students with a wider range of interests. Workshops have been delivered to over 500 students. Initial feedback has indicated that as a result of the events 75% are more interested in progressing to higher education and 85% understood more about higher education. The delivery of these workshops has been integrated into the Aimhigher menu of activities, and has helped to build strong relationships between Aimhigher and the educational establishments.

'Passport to University' – an aspiration-raising activity day for Year 7 pupils

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher West Yorkshire

Contact details

Helen Smith

HEAR WY Project Co-ordinator

0113 2832600 ext 5742

h.m.smith@leedsmet.ac.uk

(HEAR WY) took the lead in developing and delivering the 'Passport to University' days individual HE Institutions provided venues, staff support and student ambassadors

they get to see themselves with a mortar board, gown and certificate, and have graduation photos taken

Background and context

West Yorkshire has been shown to indicate a lower than national average rate of progression to higher education. The rationale behind the Year 7 'Passport to University' Day was to outline to the students the benefits of progressing to higher education, from early on in their secondary education. That way, as they proceeded through school taking part in Aimhigher activities, the opportunities afforded by such a progression would be made apparent to them. The target children were from those backgrounds which currently are not well represented in HE, for example certain postcode areas or socio-economic groups.

Higher Education Aspiration Raising West Yorkshire (HEAR WY) took the lead in developing and delivering the 'Passport to University' days whilst individual HE Institutions provided venues, staff support and student ambassadors.

Description of the activity

The overall aims of the Passport days were:

- To raise awareness of Higher Education amongst targeted school pupils
- To raise the aspirations and motivation of these pupils, whilst having fun
- To introduce 'real life' students to the pupils who are able to act as suitable role models

The theme was the completion of a passport-style booklet. The children were asked to complete their personal details in the 'passport', were provided with a 'Passport to University' t-shirt, and had their photograph taken. Each completed activity was stamped with a special stamp.

The specific activities are as follows:

- Personal details – an ice-breaker to find out prior knowledge of HE
- Careers game – to encourage pupils to think about future careers if they go into HE
- What do I need for a day at Uni? – looking at student independence, organisation and the differences between school and university
- Clubs and societies – word-search and poster-making activity.
- Campus treasure hunt
- University lecture in a lecture theatre – Graduation ceremony – prize giving.

Each child has the opportunity to 'see' themselves as a graduate: HEAR created an 'Old Master' graduation portrait, with a hole for their faces; they get to see themselves with a mortar board, gown and certificate, and have graduation photos taken.

HEAR WY would like to acknowledge the assistance of the all the West Yorkshire Higher Education Institutions for their practical support in hosting the Passport to University days and for their advice on their development.

How the activity made a difference

The scheme was piloted in April 2002 with 108 pupils. The evaluations from both teachers and pupils were so positive that HEAR WY was asked to develop the day so that more children could have the chance to take part. This year, in April and May, between 650 and

700 pupils will experience the Passport to University day.

Children from Wakefield schools who took part in recent Passport to University days were asked to write down 3 things they had learned from their first visit to university, and what they thought of the day. Their responses were overwhelmingly positive:

'It was ace',

'I loved today and everything was great, I hope I can come again',

'All of the day was excellent and I am definitely going to university'



'All of the day was excellent and I am definitely going to university'

The teachers have expressed interest in bringing further groups in to experience the days and demand for the activity is growing all the time as word of the successful days spreads across West Yorkshire.

Subsequent or ongoing work

Such has been the success and demand of work for children in the younger age groups, HEAR WY now has a dedicated member of staff who will look at developing and delivering more activities for Year 7 with a further follow-on activity for Year 8 before they reach the age when they can participate in the successful ACE Days used with Year 9 pupils. The West Yorkshire HEIs are now keen to become involved in rolling out the Passport to University day themselves as they have seen its impact in raising awareness and positive attitudes at first hand. At each Passport to University day, the HEAR WY team is taking details of each participant for monitoring and tracking purposes as they progress through the school system.

The West Yorkshire HEIs are now keen to become involved in rolling out the Passport to University day



University of Cambridge

Aimhigher Days

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Cambridgeshire
and Peterborough

Contact details

Anna Hobbs
ah295@admin.cam.ac.uk

The target group for this pilot was students in Year 10 from East of England schools with lower than average progression and GCSE A* - C attainment rates

a day to learn about higher education (HE) options and attend taster sessions on a variety of subjects not available to them at GCSE

Background and context

The University of Cambridge attracts students from across the world but importantly it is also a higher education provider for the local community. The region is generally affluent but has pockets of urban deprivation, rurally-isolated areas and schools with low attainment and progression rates.

As part of its widening participation activities, the University of Cambridge has delivered a series of Aimhigher Days to which students and teachers from across the East of England were invited. The target group for this pilot was students in Year 10 from East of England schools with lower than average progression and GCSE A* - C attainment rates. School co-ordinators were asked to select students who showed good academic ability, but who were not identified as part of the Gifted and Talented cohort. Additional criteria identified students who lacked confidence in their abilities, had received few similar opportunities at school or who may be disaffected or at risk of disengaging from education after GCSEs.

Description of the activity

The students attended a day to learn about higher education (HE) options and attend taster sessions on a variety of subjects not available to them at GCSE. The original four days planned in early 2005 were increased to six due to demand.

The aims of the events were to:

- Allow the selected students to feel able to take advantage of facilities at a local HE provider in order to enrich their studies.
- Educate these students about different types of HE institutions (HEIs) and courses, including vocational and academic pathways.
- Give a wider picture of the opportunities available to them, using the University of Cambridge and other local providers as examples.
- Dispel some myths about higher education so that students understand that it is accessible for them.
- Identify and address some concerns and questions from the students themselves about the social, academic and administrative aspects of participation.
- Foster a positive attitude towards further and higher education and to motivate students to engage with their current studies.

Aimhigher Days offer a programme in two sections. The morning session uses group activities to educate students about the options available in higher education, to identify and address misconceptions and questions about HE and to explore the differences between their current situation at school and life as a student. Activities include quizzes, 'a day in the life' case studies and identifying different types of qualifications.

The afternoon programme offers two subject-specific sessions presented by academics from University Departments. Sessions aim to give students an idea of the range of subjects available and how their current studies might relate to them. Sessions have included Archaeology, Code-breaking, Classics, Norse and Viking culture, Engineering and Law.

Most of the students stated that they were surprised to hear about the range of different pathways available to them



How the activity made a difference

Around fifty students and staff attended each Aimhigher Day, coming from 28 schools. Feedback from the students and teachers has been very positive. Most of the students stated that they were surprised to hear about the range of different pathways available to them and that they could enjoy learning about subjects they had not studied before. Other noticeable outcomes were that students recognised the differences between school and higher education with regard to teaching methods and student lifestyle and understood more about the financial issues. Students also reported that while they had expected to find the university 'posh' and 'old' they were pleased with the facilities and found staff and undergraduates approachable and helpful.

The Aimhigher Days have been successful in raising the aspirations of participants, both towards progression to higher education and to considering accessing the full range of HE providers across the country.

they were pleased with the facilities and found staff and undergraduates approachable and helpful

Subsequent or ongoing work

A review of Aimhigher activities in the University will take place once the current programme of Aimhigher Days has been completed. It is likely that a further programme of similar events will be planned for the next academic year. Both the general higher education session and the subject-specific session were very well received and will be part of the new programme. It is likely that more schools in the immediate local area will be targeted and larger groups from each school invited to attend. The day's programme will be expanded to include a short campus tour and additional group work. The interactive elements of the events are extremely important and will be fostered in order to make the experience enjoyable and educational for all participants.

Oxford Women's Training Scheme – Technology Taster and HE Bridging Programme

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Milton Keynes
Oxfordshire &
Buckinghamshire

Contact details

Pauline Walters
Project Manager, Oxford
Women's Training Scheme
01865 741317
women@owts.org.uk

Monica Owen, Development
Officer (FE)
Aimhigher MKOB
01494 476 504
m.owen@aimhighermkob.co.uk

Andy Howells, Senior Project
Officer (HE and Adult &
Community Learning)
Aimhigher MKOB
01865 487661
a.j.howells@aimhighermkob.co.uk

technology taster day
as a feeder to a
higher education
bridging programme

The taster day
concluded with a
discussion of training
and higher education
opportunities in the
technology sector

Background and context

Aimhigher Milton Keynes Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire (MKOB) is working with Oxford Women's Training Scheme (OWTS) and the Open University to deliver a technology taster day as a feeder to a higher education bridging programme.

OWTS enables women to gain skills, knowledge and confidence in a women-friendly learning environment. It specialises in providing training in non-traditional, practical and technical skills where there are growing job opportunities. The range of courses caters for those wanting to progress to an advanced level as well as beginners and improvers. All courses lead to nationally-recognised qualifications. OWTS also runs short taster courses in community venues around Oxfordshire.

OWTS courses are open to women of all ages over 16, and resident in the UK for a minimum of 3 years. All courses are completely free to women on benefits, those aged 16-18, asylum seekers, those on basic skills programmes, and those without a previous Level 2 equivalent qualification. Other women pay only the cost of the accreditation for the relevant course although financial support is available.

Description of the activity

OWTS and Aimhigher held a technology taster day at the Open University Regional Centre. An OU Technology tutor developed the theme of flight to illustrate the engineering life cycle. Participants were fully involved in the familiar activity of making paper aeroplanes – but in an unfamiliar context! The taster day concluded with a discussion of training and higher education opportunities in the technology sector.

How the activity made a difference

As one of a series of tasters, the activity helped raise awareness of and enthusiasm for educational achievement for women in non-traditional areas. The taster also raised awareness of higher education opportunities, particularly through part-time and supported distance learning, and served as a signpost to the higher education bridging course delivered in collaboration between Aimhigher and OWTS.

Subsequent or ongoing work

The Aimhigher MKOB Bridging Programme is designed to build confidence and raise aspirations for students currently studying, or who have previously studied, Level 3 vocational programmes to enter HE. In particular, it aims to:

- raise aspirations and encourage confidence among students with no HE tradition;
- provide information and guidance about HE opportunities, environment, and long-term benefits, and actively support the application process;
- equip students with particular skills identified to enable students to cope with HE level study;
- identify any specialist support if required by the HEI to enable the students to succeed; and
- enable vocational students to gain a supplementary qualification to support and enhance their HE application.

The programme is to be OCN-accredited and has been specially adapted for women in the engineering/technology area run by the OWTS over five weeks in the summer holidays.

Sports Fairs, a taster activity

Aimhigher Area

London Aimhigher Sports Partnership

Contact details

Ruth Morrison

Sport Partnership Manager

0207 664 2075

r.morrison@ulu.lon.ac.uk

Background and context

The Sports Partnership, as one of the thematic groups in the London region, is pretty unique in what we do and how we operate. Our activity is spread across the 6 London partnerships and interweaves with a variety of other partners including University and College Sport (UCS), London 2012 and the Youth Sport Trust. The Sports Partnership has two main themes:

- using sport as an activity to raise the aspirations of young people through mentoring by HE/FE student coaches
- using sport as a taster activity by providing information on and demonstrations of various different sports-related careers.

Sport is often a hugely popular hobby for young people, but rarely considered as a career. With the growing number of schools striving for and achieving specialist sport status, as well as more and more FE and HE institutions offering sports courses, this will change. At this exciting time when London is gearing up to find out whether it will win the bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games, there has never been a better time to be involved in sport, particularly in London.

Sports Fairs are based around providing information on, and demonstration of, sports careers. They are designed to show and promote the wealth of career opportunity that exists within the sports industry. At one point or another, most boys will have dreamed of becoming the next David Beckham or Johnny Wilkinson, and girls perhaps Paula Radcliffe or the next Olympic champion gymnast. It's not often they get an experience or insight beyond the playing of sport itself and see the wider context. The Sports Fairs give young people with an interest in sport the opportunity to see how they can take their interest and hobby and turn it into one of many related careers.

Description of the activity

The Sports Fair is located at the University of London Union (ULU). Six sports industry professionals have been brought together to deliver workshops in rotation over the course of a day. Pupils from schools in the London boroughs of Camden and Islington were invited, along with pupils from Whitefield Specialist Sports College in Barnet.

Workshops are between 25-30 minutes long and presenters have been given the brief to make them informative, interactive and fun. Workshops start with the Sports Journalist who gives the pupils an idea of a day in his life and gets them involved in a press conference, which will stimulate and improve their written English.

The Sports Product design lecturer gets to work on their creativity by asking the students to design their own product – who knows, a two-handed tennis racket could be the next big thing.

Having a fitness facility on-site with sports hall, studio, swimming pool and a gym means that the pupils get a guided tour around and have the chance to sample the different types of jobs on offer there.

After lunch, there is a workshop for the scientists among the pupils. How muscles work is an essential part of what any physiotherapist will learn, and then there's a chance to test those muscles out with a half-hour stint in the Sports Hall to wake up from that mid-afternoon slump.

the opportunity to see how they can take their interest and hobby and turn it into one of many related careers



Six sports industry professionals have been brought together to deliver workshops in rotation over the course of a day

Each presenter talks about their career, which subject and education choices they made in order to get to where they are today

> It is a fun day but has a serious message. Each presenter talks about their career, which subject and education choices they made in order to get to where they are today. A variety of sports materials and information is on hand after the event. Teachers are given prospectuses of the higher education institutions across London and see that there are over 185 full-time sports-related courses in London alone according to UCAS, and so students have the opportunity to investigate for themselves after the Sports Fair is finished.

How the activity made a difference

3 Boroughs, 6 schools and PE teachers who have had little to do with Aimhigher activity before, got involved at ULU

Over 80 pupils attend each of the Sports Fairs, and spread the word to their friends about the fun they had. 3 Boroughs, 6 schools, and PE teachers who have had little to do with Aimhigher activity before, got involved at ULU.

Students were asked to rate the relevance of the day, how much they enjoyed it, and what difference it might have made to their decision to consider applying for HE.

All the pupils who took part in the day enjoyed it. It was the first time many of them had heard of most of these careers or had met real sports professionals. Sports journalists are usually just on television. Many of the routes to these careers are practical-based and may appeal more to pupils who want vocational and 'hands on', rather than strictly academic, work.

Subsequent or ongoing work

Sport almost sells itself to young people but they and their teachers and parents, who may not have had much experience or knowledge of the opportunities that now exist, still need convincing about sports courses in higher education and sports careers. We will build up profiles of all the professionals taking part in our fairs and put them to our website so that pupils can access them at any time.

By holding these Sports Fairs we will continue not only to show the pupils many of the opportunities available, but enable both pupils and teachers to take the message to parents that sport is a valid education and career choice. Our ultimate aim is engaging teachers, parents, and more schools, and helping learners focus their enthusiasm and passion for sport.

Raising aspirations through progressive interventions

Aimhigher Area

The Peninsula partnership:
South West region

Contact details

Dr Jane Cavanagh

01752 322193

j.c.cavanagh@plymouth.ac.uk

Web addresses

www.gr8choice.org

www.gradsouthwest.com

All of the Higher Education Institutions and Further Education Colleges worked together with secondary schools in the Peninsula Partnership to design a progressive, coherent programme of interventions

Bringing young people into contact with HE students from similar backgrounds is a powerful way of enabling school students to explore the student experience

Background and context

In Devon, Cornwall and parts of Somerset, young people with the potential to benefit from higher education (HE) were not considering progression to HE as a realistic option for them. Those with no parental experience of HE were unaware of the ways in which HE could be accessed, what it might offer them and of the opportunities in their own locality.

Description of the activity

All of the Higher Education Institutions and Further Education Colleges worked together with secondary schools in the Peninsula Partnership to design a progressive, coherent programme of interventions. This programme was offered to young people with no parental experience of higher education in targeted schools in the Peninsula area. Although all secondary schools in Devon, Cornwall and part of Somerset are partners in the Peninsula programme, 44 schools were selected for the programme of intensive interventions on the basis of their GCSE results, the percentage of pupils receiving free school meals and their distance from an HEI. Other schools in the area receive a limited range of interventions.

The programme begins with theatre work and creative arts workshops for 11- and 12-year olds in Year 7, followed by taster sessions and visits by students to Personal, Social and Moral Education (PSME) lessons in Year 8. The workshops, taster sessions and PSME lessons involve the deployment of trained HE students acting as ambassadors for the school students. The ambassadors answer questions about the realities of student life from their own lived experience. Bringing young people into contact with HE students from similar backgrounds is a powerful way of enabling school students to explore the student experience and helping them to appreciate the benefits of HE.

By the time these school pupils reach Year 9, the programme is well established. The young peoples' interest in HE is maintained through a website designed for their age group, by an HE presence at options choice events, and by the opportunity to take part in an overnight residential at a local university campus. Going away from home with a group of classmates and spending one night in student accommodation helps to extend the horizons of these young people and build their confidence so that the HE experience starts to become more familiar.

In Years 10 and 11, the programme continues with subject-specific links and mentoring programmes to support school pupils' studies so that they can achieve the results they need to continue post 16 and progress towards HE. Until the end of Year 11, the Peninsula programme is generic; it concentrates on raising aspirations and awareness of the HE experience regardless of where or what students want to study.

Beyond GCSE, the focus shifts. As their studies become more specialised, young people begin to consider their choice of course and institution in more detail and the Peninsula programme supports this process by producing accessible sources of information to supplement the institutional marketing from HEIs. For example, the Peninsula programme offers a website with alumni profiles and collaborative prospectuses detailing the vocational and academic HE courses available in the Peninsula area. From entry to secondary school until the point of HE entry young people in the 44 target schools are offered a programme of support appropriate to their age and stage as they approach HE entry.

By the end of the event, an average of 80 per cent report wanting to go on to higher education

>

How the activity made a difference

- Prior to the start of an activity, approximately 30 per cent of participants say that they have considered university as an option. By the end of the event, an average of 80 per cent report wanting to go on to higher education – and that figure rises to 98 per cent for young people in Years 7 and 8

- Comments from the participants included:

"I think the session was very good because I learnt more about higher education and what going to university is all about... It isn't like school. I think that I'll definitely go to Uni"

"I'll be the first in my family. I want to just do sport all the time. I think University would be great."

- School students are offered a coherent programme of support tailored to their needs. The programme develops from generic aspiration-raising to more specific information about choice of course and institution as the young people progress through secondary school towards HE
- Trained HE students work as ambassadors providing role models for the school students and showing by their lived example that 'people like us can go to university'. One participant commented that "the student ambassadors made me feel very comfortable and were very friendly"
- The HEIs and FECs work collaboratively to promote the generic concept of HE to school students. This approach makes sense to groups with no background in HE
- The residential experience enables school pupils to sample the HE environment for a short period of time and in the company of their classmates
- Information to inform the choice of course and institution is presented as the pupils approach HE entry and supplements the marketing literature provided by HE providers
- The programme is targeted to those school pupils with the potential to progress and with no parental experience of HE. Working repeatedly with pupils over a number of years builds up aspirations and motivation within the peer group.

The programme is targeted to those school pupils with the potential to progress and with no parental experience of HE

>

Subsequent or ongoing work

The programme will continue until at least July 2006. The Peninsula is aware that work with schools cannot be effective in isolation and needs to be reinforced by work with parents, carers and other key individuals in the wider community. The programme includes a strand of activity to work with opinion formers so that key influencers will be able to support young people in their decision-making.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Access Regional Scheme (STARS) - at Belgrave High School, Tamworth, Staffordshire

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent

Contact details

Jill Chester/Jo Burgess

STARS

Staffordshire University

01782 294901

j.chester@staffs.ac.uk

j.burgess@staffs.ac.uk

Those least likely to participate in higher education are targeted with a variety of activities aiming to encourage them to consider and to aspire to higher education

The taster sessions gave the pupils the opportunity to use some of the high-tech and modern equipment that the universities have available

Background and context

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Access Regional Scheme (STARS) is a collaborative project led by Staffordshire University. The scheme aims to raise aspirations and improve progression to further education and/or higher education through engaging schools and their pupils in a range of activities provided by project partners which include the local universities and FE colleges.

The local area has a low progression rate to higher education with Staffordshire currently at 31% and some areas of Stoke-on-Trent less than 16%. 24% participation is the 'working percentage' used as the baseline figure for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Those least likely to participate in higher education are targeted with a variety of activities aiming to encourage them to consider and to aspire to higher education in the future.

Using the above figures as the baseline, those schools from wards with a progression rate into HE below 24% were invited to take part in the project. The target group for the scheme is diverse in terms of age as it is open to pupils from the widening participation cohort from Year 8 to Year 13. The programme provides taster activities and events for pupils held both at the universities and colleges, and through outreach at the schools. The schools are provided with a menu of activities and are then free to choose the activities that they attend. Schools are encouraged to enable pupils to participate in at least three activities each year.

Description of the activity

Belgrave High School is a secondary school in Tamworth, Staffordshire, which has participated actively in the STARS scheme since it was launched in 2003. For the purpose of this study, we will focus on periods one and two of the second year of STARS. The school has participated in 9 activities from the period August 2004 to March 2005 and also has activities planned for the forthcoming period. The 9 events selected by the school were a mixture of in-school events (2) and university-based events (7). They included several 'taster sessions' to enable the students to experience a subject that they may not have had the chance to study at school. For those events that were university-based, it also gave the pupils a chance to experience a university environment and sample a little of what higher education could be like for them.

> The taster sessions gave the pupils the opportunity to use some of the high-tech and modern equipment that the universities have available and to open their eyes to the unusual subjects available in higher education. These activities included 'Using Science to Solve Crime', 'Film Making Techniques and Children's TV', 'Moderate Exercise on a Human Subject', 'Criminology in the Courtroom' and 'Writing a Script and Quiz Show'. These sessions allowed academic staff to demonstrate how very traditional subjects such as Chemistry and English can be used and studied in different ways.

The activities provided were interactive, encouraging the pupils to participate and experience the subject for themselves. Belgrave High School also participated in National Science Week and a Study Skills session for its older pupils. During the period, over 200 Belgrave High School pupils from Year 9 to Year 13 participated in STARS activities, all of which met with very positive comments from both the pupils and the teaching staff involved.

How the activity made a difference

STARS has had an impact on increasing awareness, positive attitudes and aspirations toward higher education among those from under-represented groups. Responses from Belgrave High School pupils support this:

'I found this hour very useful. It will give us a more rounded view when we come to study this at A2.' (Year 13, Criminology in the Courtroom)

'Looking around the University... gave me a good outlook of University life'

> 'Looking around the University... gave me a good outlook of university life.' (Year 12, Film Making Techniques and Children's TV)

'Best part of the day – filming and presenting, because it's the first time I've ever worked with a camera! It was cool!' (Year 12, Film Making Techniques and Children's TV)

'I enjoyed writing the script as it gave me new ideas and was a chance to do something I haven't done before.' (Year 12/13, Writing a Script and Quiz Show)

'Best part of the day – being part of a different atmosphere'

> 'Best part of the day – being part of a different atmosphere.' (Year 12/13, The Effect of Moderate Exercise on a Human Subject)

'Best part of the day – finger printing because we got to use different techniques.' Year 10, Using Science to Solve Crime)

Teachers who have accompanied the pupils on the activities have also responded positively:

'...our students will have gained a lot from the visit.' (Film Making Techniques and Children's TV)

Subsequent or ongoing work

Student Ambassadors play an active role in the delivery of the STARS activities and contribute to the raising of aspirations amongst the pupils who attend

> Student Ambassadors play an active role in the delivery of the STARS activities and contribute to the raising of aspirations amongst the pupils who attend. The responses from Belgrave High School pupils and staff suggest that their involvement is important:

'It was helpful learning from students because we relate to them better.' (Year 12/13 pupil)

'Best part of the day - getting students to work with older students and working independently from teaching staff.' (Teacher)

'Best part of the day - students being able to work with/be mentored by older students as they have gained from this experience.' (Teacher)

The STARS project recognises the importance of Student Ambassadors and includes wherever possible a minimum of two with each activity. They have proved to be of great benefit to the scheme. University-based activities have also proved popular with Belgrave High School and this is an opportunity for the pupils to have experience of the higher education environment and to increase positive attitudes and aspirations among pupils and staff involved in the events

High School Co-ordinators and Student Advocates

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Northumberland

Contact details

Mark Stutt – Project Manager

(01670) 841 200 ext 535

mark.stutt@northland.ac.uk

Web address

www.aimhighernorthumberland.co.uk

The aim is for students > to realise that they can study at HE level and that people 'just like me' have done, and are doing, HE level courses

Background and context

The local situation in Northumberland is as follows

- Average KS3 points: 34.8 (England: 34.3);
- 54% gained 5 GCSE grades A*-C (England: 52.9%);
- Average A-level points per students 243 (England 258.9);
- 15 High Schools with 6th Forms, one FEC;
- Pop. 306,000 - 46% of the population reside in just 2.7% of the land area;
- The County is one of great contrasts: rural deprivation and also exclusivity, urban decline and prosperous housing developments;
- At district level, Northumberland participation rates in 2000-01 varied from a low of 2.3% in Wansbeck to 5.0% in Castle Morpeth with the county mean average equating to 3.9% which is higher than the England average of 3.7%.

Rationale, Aims and Targets of Activity

- Outside of Excellence Challenge area in one town, the county had no input from Aimhigher before Aimhigher: P4P;
- Aimhigher Co-ordinators and Student Advocates for each High School/college in the county;
- Co-ordinators are school staff who act as a focal point for HE information into and out of the school, organise HE related activities for their students funded by Aimhigher;
- Advocates are former pupils of each school/college studying an HE level course locally who return to their former school/college to deliver talks, Q&A sessions, 'tell it how it is';
- The aim is for students to realise that they can study at HE level and that people 'just like me' have done, and are doing, HE level courses;
- Advocates are contactable via website & e-mail;
- Co-ordinators and advocates meet termly to discuss relevant issues and share best practice.

The target groups

- School and college students in the 15 High Schools and 1 FEC. Not only those who have already expressed an interest in HE but those who have the potential but need more information/motivation

Description of the activity

Below are the accounts of activities taking place in three of the 15 High Schools:

Ashington High School:

Graffiti Wall display in 6th Form Common Room. Students were asked to stick stars on a Graffiti Wall display in the Sixth Form Common Room on the issues that they would like to receive more information about.

From discussion with Year 12 & 13 students and from the Graffiti Wall, it appears that they are very well informed about applying, loans, tuition fees etc. However, it was clear that

the students would like more information on 'leisure issues'. They were also concerned about money issues – how to budget effectively.

A Lunch Time Drop-In takes place every Wednesday lunchtime and is well attended by Year 9 and 11 students. The sessions mostly consist of informal discussions, finding out what they want to do and how they can get there. A lot of this involves raising aspirations and giving information on HE courses, apprenticeships, work experience etc.

Year 11 Assembly covers:

- Regarding different routes into HE. An ex-student in the RAF spoke about his route into HE via vocational qualifications;
- 'What we did then and what we do now' – activity based on '5 years from now'. Use experiences and destinations of 1997's Year 11 students.

Hirst High School:

> Through the AimHigher project we have been able to take part in a number of activities and hold a number of events which in the past may not have been possible, including:

- A termly newsletter for Years 9-13 includes information relevant for each group;
- Year 11 students have secured places on HE summer schools;
- Y12 students are taking part in shadowing and Steps into Uni days;
- We also have 50 Y12 students attending an HE convention;
- Sixth-form conference booked for July.

King Edward VI High School (Morpeth):

Julie Sanderson, the advocate for King Edward VI School, has been involved in a programme of delivering after-school sessions to groups of students from all year groups. Julie has prepared a Powerpoint presentation which she uses to discuss how further/higher education has affected her life and the benefits that it has brought. Julie then conducts a question and answer session with the students and is able to research any issues raised. She will then feed back to the students when next in school.

In total, across all 15 schools and the college, to Easter 2005 in the Academic Year 2004-05 the Advocates had seen personally 1843 school/college students delivering 1645 learner hours.

How the activity made a difference

Ashington High School:

> Having the Student Advocate has allowed students with queries to get information 'from the horse's mouth' without any institutional bias. They can readily identify with the Student Advocate. The funds have allowed activities to take place that haven't been possible before.

Hirst High School:

Perhaps one of the biggest successes of the project so far has been Exam Slam, a programme which has been organised for Year 11 students designed to improve aspirations, and exam techniques. The programme also encourages further consideration of progression from students who were perhaps not thinking of staying on in the Sixth

Through the AimHigher project we have been able to take part in a number of activities and hold a number of events which in the past may not have been possible

Having the Student Advocate has allowed students with queries to get information 'from the horse's mouth' without any institutional bias

AimHigher has also brought members of staff together from local schools and organisations



Form and progressing to HE. A cohort of approximately 30 students has been attending sessions twice a week after school to improve their memory, revision skills, exam techniques etc. They have also enjoyed talks about 6th Form, HE and other progression routes and this particular group of students has committed themselves to these activities. AimHigher has allowed us to use quality resources and reward the students for their effort and commitment.

AimHigher has also helped us involve the lower school far more in preparation for higher education through ACE Days and university visits, and this is rewarding as it has meant that we can raise the aspirations of our students before they even enter the Sixth Form.

More generally, AimHigher has also brought members of staff together from local schools and organisations and through this some good contacts have been made and we have been able to share good practice.

Subsequent or ongoing work

The Co-ordinator and Advocate posts are continuing for 2005-2006.

Community Pathways into HE: Beyond GCSE? - University of Leeds

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher West Yorkshire

Contact details

Fiona Chapel

f.chapel@leeds.ac.uk

Olivia Garvey

o.garvey@leeds.ac.uk

0113 343 3229

The work is negotiated >
and delivered in
partnership with 3 FE
colleges

Background and context

The project supports mature learners who are studying at GCSE level in community settings, and are from the most disadvantaged and socially-excluded areas within Leeds. The objectives are to encourage students to progress from Level 2 to Level 3 qualifications, increase awareness of pathways into higher education (HE) across the region, and raise personal aims and aspirations to HE. The programme also aims to improve articulation between sectors and streamline progression between institutions.

The programme is a joint further education (FE) and higher education initiative. The students are studying in community settings and the programme encourages them to consider higher education. These students do not have qualifications beyond Level 2 and tend not to be from backgrounds where anyone in their family or people they know have gone onto HE. The work is negotiated and delivered in partnership with 3 FE colleges across Leeds, and part funded by Aimhigher.

Description of the activity

A flexible and responsive programme of activities has been devised in collaboration with FE staff and the learners themselves. Activities include:

- Day schools at the University of Leeds, involving subject-based support from faculties as well as generic study skills
- Visits to undergraduate lectures and related academic departments
- Campus tours
- Top-up sessions held at college venues and taught by university subject specialists
- Taster sessions taught at the university (e.g. Art History for OCN Art classes)
- Project staff visit groups of adult learners at their college centres.
- Ongoing group and individual advice and guidance sessions including information on finance, pathways into HE and support for mature students while at universities.
- Provision of study materials aimed at raising attainment and aspirations and promoting an awareness of the possibilities within HE.
- Childcare
- Transport
- Delivery at local venues.

In the current academic year:

- we have worked in 10 community bases, involving 32 groups, and with a total of 384 learners
- 120 students have attended 8 study days held at the University so far
- there are 5 further events planned for this academic year
- 48 students have already received pre-HE entry guidance.

How the activity made a difference

Participants have gone on to study degree programmes in Accounting, English, Childhood Studies, Business Studies, Education, Professional Studies in Family Support and Professional Studies in Teaching & Learning.

Although typically only a very few people in a Level 2 or GCSE group will be thinking about going on to HE at the start of a course, through contact with the project, by the end of that course the whole group will have an increased awareness of HE and approximately 50% will be considering progressing to HE. 355 students have attended study days over the last 2 years and evaluation forms show that the majority of these are now thinking about HE as an option.

355 students have attended study days over the last 2 years



An overall increase in students' confidence and learner self-esteem is noted by many tutors. Tutors said: "confidence as well as knowledge are the keys to adults doing well in exams, especially as many of them are scared of taking them", and "the study days give students the confidence to approach assignments positively."

The project is removing barriers to personal and social education. One FE centre manager thought that: "Meeting students from other centres and sharing experiences is also very positive and helps to widen students' networks." The students become more independent and resourceful, and are now more confident about accessing advice and guidance independently, feeling more at ease with project, university or college staff whenever they need more information

A learner commented that "It (the study day) made me realise that university is accessible to all whatever age or educational background you are from.", and "I was not sure that university would be the right place for me but after today I am not as afraid as I was before."

The programme has become established with the college course tutors as well as the centre managers: one tutor told us that "it has now become part of the (GCSE) programme".

FE tutors report an increased staff awareness of HE and progression routes as a result of the project.



FE tutors report an increased staff awareness of HE and progression routes as a result of the project. One reported that he feels more confident to encourage students towards HE as he now has a specific point of contact whereas in the past he might have encouraged the student to think about HE but not known how to easily progress this.

The programme has encouraged cross-fertilisation of teaching methods and ideas between sectors. FE staff regularly come to the university to teach on the study days and to attend events run with HE staff and HE staff have run sessions at FE community centres. Through these initiatives, the project works to improve articulation between sectors and streamline progression between institutions.

According to our partner Further Education centre managers, 2004's GCSE results were the best ever and new GCSE enrolments were also up on previous years. This may be at least in part to the support of the project.

Subsequent or ongoing work

The project has resulted in raised students' aspirations for their children. All the tutors interviewed have mentioned how students talk about wanting their children to go on to

Some project beneficiaries are "success stories" and become role models within their own communities, inspiring others to return to education

- > Some project beneficiaries are "success stories" and become role models within their own communities, inspiring others to return to education and move on in their lives, and building the capacity of these communities.
- We are currently conducting an evaluation to track the progression of learners who have been involved with the work.
- The project continues to raise the profile and availability of higher education with adult students from socially-deprived areas within the city. The success of this project continues to be disseminated throughout the University of Leeds as an example of good practice in the addressing needs of adult learners.

Notes

Notes

Notes

Further information

If you want to know more please get in touch with those named in the case studies. If you wish to contact someone in your area go to the Action on Access website where you will find contact details for those responsible for Aimhigher.

www.actiononaccess.org