

Making a Difference:

The Impact of Aimhigher

Mentoring, Ambassadors and Student Associates

Mentoring, Ambassadors and Student Associates

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:

ACE, taster and other aspiration-raising activity

Summer Schools

Progression to higher education from vocational, work-based and work-related learning

Engagement of parents and carers

Masterclasses and other attainment-raising activity

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

Mentoring, Ambassadors and Student Associates

Introduction	2
Champions of Learning Project	4
Aimhigher Greater Merseyside	
Mentoring people at work for progression to higher education	6
Aimhigher Milton Keynes Oxfordshire Buckinghamshire (MKOB)	
E-mentoring for students in "cool spot" schools in rural North Yorkshire	8
Aimhigher North Yorkshire	
Focus Ambassador Project	10
Aimhigher Central London	
Developing the student resource	12
The Peninsula area partnership: South West region	
The Aimhigher Hertfordshire Peer Mentoring Scheme	14
Aimhigher Hertfordshire	
Aimhigher e-volve@neba	16
Aimhigher Nottinghamshire	
Students into Schools, Colleges, Community (SiS)	18
Aimhigher Tyne and Wear	
E-mentoring in Healthcare: working with the Brightside Trust	20
Aimhigher West partnership: South West region	
Student Link Mentoring Programme	22
Aimhigher Kent & Medway	
Raising Achievement and Aspirations through Volunteer Business Mentors	24
Aimhigher West Yorkshire	
Working with the National Mentoring Scheme	26
Aimhigher Derbyshire	
Student Ambassador and Mentoring Training - March 2004/January 2005	28
Aimhigher London West	
E-mentoring for Health Care (Great Yarmouth NHSU Academy: Great Yarmouth Education Action Zone, Aimhigher Norfolk and the NHSU)	29
Aimhigher Norfolk	

Introduction

Mentoring, Ambassadors and Student Associates

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 always 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.

Finding out about and applying to higher education on your own can be a daunting task, especially for anyone from a background where higher education is not normally an option. Increasingly people are being helped to fulfil their potential through the support and encouragement of a teacher, community leader, or some type of mentor.

Mentoring encompasses and employs different models and strategies, and is most often employed in Aimhigher activity aimed at raising attainment or aspirations as the case studies show. University and college students, so often involved as Aimhigher mentors or student ambassadors, report benefiting as much as those they are mentoring.

One-to-one regular ongoing support for an individual is a powerful tool to help people maximise their potential as these informative, uplifting and useful case studies show.

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.

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

Champions of Learning Project

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Greater Merseyside

Contact details

Angie Daly/Pam Mahony
Aimhigher Champions Project
University of Liverpool
0151 794 1333/1334
angela.daly@liv.ac.uk
p.mahony@liv.ac.uk

Emy Onuora
Director
Aimhigher Greater Merseyside
0151 794 1359
emekao@liv.ac.uk

Website

www.ahgtm.ac.uk/champions

This helped to raise the young people's awareness of university life

The film project is enabling the students to articulate young people's issues and needs in a creative manner

Background and context

The Champions of Learning project is an action learning project that is working to challenge the culture of low expectations that stops young people who are able but unlikely to progress into higher or further education. It is an intensive, focused programme, which currently works with 100 Year 9 students from ten schools across Greater Merseyside.

The activities are designed to help the young people to become more confident in their own abilities through an exciting programme of teamwork, communication and life skills. They will have an opportunity to experience further education, so that they can learn more about the course options available at their local colleges.

The programme also supports the young people to become Champions of Learning by empowering them to advocate learning to their peers and younger age groups.

Description of the activity

Widening Participation Activities - the Champions programme is delivered out of school, during holidays and on Saturdays. The first stage was for the young people to apply to become part of the project and to demonstrate commitment by 'opting in' to the Champions ethos. The Champions team carried out introduction sessions with nearly 300 students, 95 parents and 32 school staff from across 10 schools in Greater Merseyside, selected by the LEA Aimhigher Co-ordinators and all in areas of low participation and lower than average levels of GCSE passes.

The students apply to be on the project and complete an application form highlighting their reasons for applying and also their perceptions of the barriers preventing young people from progressing on to higher education.

The Champions students had to apply to become part of the Champions project, which meant that the students had to fill out an application form but also undergo an interview at the University of Liverpool. The interviews were complemented by a tour of the University of Liverpool campus led by student advocates. This helped to raise the young people's awareness of university life. The students also had an opportunity to stay at students' halls in the University of Liverpool as part of the Champions film residential.

Champions Film Project - the 100 Champions students are currently in Stage Two of the project. The students attended a film residential in the University of Liverpool where they learned about the film-making process. Sessions included dance, camera, lights, music production, pitching techniques and editing.

The Champions students are currently working with a local production company, Pidgin Productions, researching and making films which examine the barriers and solutions to progressing to higher education. The film project is enabling the students to articulate young people's issues and needs in a creative manner. The students are developing new skills and are learning to work in teams with young people from across Greater Merseyside. A two-day film residential provided a taster of the jobs involved in making a film e.g. camera, lights and pitching film ideas. The students are currently attending technical workshops on Saturdays where they are working together to develop their film ideas. The filming and editing for each of the four films will take place in July/August 2005. The films will be premiered in Liverpool on the 2nd of October 2005.

Champions of Learning activities - the Champions students are due to enter Stage Three of the project in October 2005. Students have already expressed their interest in acting as advocates for younger students and are coming up with suggestions for how they think the advocacy stage should be delivered.

The students will be able to use their experiences to inspire and motivate younger students >

The films produced by the Champions students will be used as educational materials for delivery in schools. The students will become advocates for younger students (both in primary and secondary education) and will use the films to explore issues which affect the potential progression of young people to higher or further education. The students will be able to use their experiences to inspire and motivate younger students.

The Champions Project is an Aimhigher Greater Merseyside Uplift Funded Project.

How the activity made a difference

The project is seeking to help Year 9 students to become better equipped to consider their options and choices and make good decisions for their future >

The Champions project is concerned with the personal development and team development of the students involved. As stated by Tricia Jenkins MBE at the Champions Launch "The involvement in action learning is an important process that will raise aspirations and attainment and help develop team-building, communication and problem-solving skills". The project is seeking to help Year 9 students to become better equipped to consider their options and choices and make good decisions for their future.

The recruitment process was a challenge for the students but all of the students did extremely well and gained confidence from the experience. The students excelled when interviewed and all gave interesting and informative presentations on 'The Person I Admire the Most' which ranged from family members, sports, music and film personalities as well as inspirational figures such as Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King.

The students' evaluation forms highlighted the value of taking part in the residential. The students' feedback included the skills they felt they had learnt from the residential and these included the following: communication, teamwork, motivation, how to improvise, sound checking, mixing music for films and learning about university life.

The technical film workshops are currently being evaluated but feedback from students at the sessions has been very positive.

Feedback from the students who all had opportunity to attend a media visit at a local FE college was that it had been very positive and that they enjoyed the experience as it enabled them to find out more about what college is like as well as learning new media skills and working together as a team.

Feedback from the Champions students highlights the positive impact the project is making on their lives >

Feedback from the Champions students highlights the positive impact the project is making on their lives. Informal feedback from parents, school staff, and members of the Aimhigher partnership also mirror the students' views of the project.

Subsequent or ongoing work

It is intended to further develop the advocacy element of the project. The students will be encouraged to share their ideas for using the films as an educational tool in the classroom.

The Champions project has had an enthusiastic response from parents, ranging from 95 attending school-based information sessions and providing in-depth supporters' references, to 73 parents participating at the Champions launch in March 2005. The Champions team is planning to carry out research on the impact Champions has made on the young people and families involved in the project and to explore ways of increasing parent participation in the Champions project. This will involve carrying out workshops in schools with the parents of the students.

The Champions project is also working closely with parents and supporters and developing a programme to support parent advocates.

Mentoring people at work for progression to higher education

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Milton Keynes
Oxfordshire Buckinghamshire
(MKOB)

Contact details

Stuart Kirk
Senior Project Officer
Aimhigher MKOB
01494 476510
s.kirk@aimhighermkob.co.uk

With all mentees who >
said that they would
be progressing, the
mentor is maintaining
ongoing contact and
support

Background and context

In 2003/4, Aimhigher MKOB identified employers and people at work as a key target group for the development of activity. The objective was to carry out an activity, yet to be decided on, that would raise the aspirations of individuals in work to progress to HE.

Description of the activity

The starting point of the project was to seek the help of employers' organisations. Meetings were arranged and held with the Thames Valley and Oxford Chambers of Commerce, Buckinghamshire Economic Partnership, Oxford Trust, Oxford Town Centre Retail Group and MOBNET (the network of work-based learning providers) on the basis that these would provide a conduit for engaging with individual employers. None of these organisations was familiar with Aimhigher and so the discussion involved explaining the aims of the project and information about Aimhigher. All the organisations had identified with the project, its underpinning values and methodology, and would be happy to be involved. However it was difficult to make progress to actual delivery and it was felt that engagement with employers through these channels would be a long-term process. An alternative strategy of contacting individual companies was pursued.

At the turn of the year a new action plan was devised. The plan was to engage with four categories of employers: twenty small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), one large private company, one large public company and one work-based learning provider. A mentoring programme would be devised and twenty mentees would be identified in each of the categories and given mentoring on 'progression to HE.'

By February 2005, an experienced mentor joined the project and detailed plans were formulated for recruitment of employers, paperwork for mentees and companies, testing of the paperwork/process, and recording the methodology.

The process adopted was to identify and approach a suitable candidate and invite them to participate in the project. An initial meeting between the mentor and mentee analysed and identified the progression required – this generally took about two hours. The mentor then researched what courses were available, where and how they were delivered, how much they cost, etc. At a second meeting three weeks later the mentor presented the options and a draft action plan – these visits on average took about one hour. A follow-up phone call two weeks later was made to take feedback from the mentee about their intentions to progress and how they found the mentoring process. Further work with the mentees depended on whether they were now going to apply for HE courses. With all mentees who said that they would be progressing, the mentor is maintaining ongoing contact and support.

To date both the large public and large private sector employers have been recruited to the project. They are Oxfordshire County Council, which employs 6000 staff, and Goodrich, a Fortune 100 company with a manufacturing division in Pitstone, Bucks. Mentoring in both organisations is due to commence in May. Aylesbury Training Group is the work-based learning provider and so far two of the twenty apprentices have been mentored. At this time most progress on the project has been with SMEs and a first analysis has been undertaken.

How the activity made a difference

The findings are as follows:

SMEs -

- The first nine companies who took part in this project were all SMEs from a variety of sectors e.g. Software, IT, Logistics, Leasing and Marketing. The average number of staff employed by these organisations is 35.

Mentees -

- All of the nine mentees were white - five females and four males. The average age was 35. The group was made up of 7 managers, 1 consultant and 1 personal assistant.
- Three of the nine identified that they would like to progress to HE but in subjects not connected to their current job role. These were subjects that were hobbies and interests of the individuals and they aspired to improve their education and eventually start new careers. The other six mentees formulated progression plans to enhance their current career. Three mentees selected courses in business and management that were of a general nature. The other three selected business/management courses but specialising in Sales, Human Resources, and Psychology.
- Following the delivery of the progression plans, the mentor scored each candidate out of ten as to whether she felt they would progress. The majority of scores fell in the range 5 to 9, indicating that there was a strong possibility that the majority of these mentees would action their progression plan.

Mentor -

The mentor made the following observations that were common to all nine mentees:

- the mentees had previously not thought of progressing to HE due to personal issues or a lack of confidence. A commonly-held view was that HE was beyond their reach. Some had not considered their own development for some time.
- all mentees had progressed in their job to managerial status without any formal HE qualification.
- all the mentees commented that the mentoring process had been valuable.
- those that previously had tried to find a HE course commented that finding the information required had been "near impossible". They further commented that researching the information had been very time-consuming and that much of it was confusing - universities and colleges have different names for the same course and web sites are difficult to navigate.
- all mentees asked for ongoing contact and support.
- the cost of some of the courses appeared to be prohibitive and there was a wide range of prices.
- the mentor had the impression that SMEs really neglected the wider personal development of the mentees, while in contrast they do carry out a significant amount of on-job training.
- the process of delivering the first nine personal progression plans had confirmed that the intervention required a highly-skilled mentor. It required someone who was an excellent communicator, listener and could handle with empathy, at times, an emotional situation.
- in all cases the mentoring had been instigated and negotiated by the individual mentee. Companies had been made aware of the mentoring but none had initiated it. All prospecting with employers to take part in this project had achieved no results. This was also the case for employers' organisations e.g. Milton Keynes Chamber of Commerce. However, they did advertise the intervention on their web site. In contrast prospecting with individuals resulted in an engagement rate of 70%.

The mentees had previously not thought of progressing to HE due to personal issues or a lack of confidence

>

The early results are pleasing and show that we have found a formula for engaging with employers

Subsequent or ongoing work

It is anticipated that this Aimhigher funded project will be completed by the Summer (2005) and a full report will be available in the Autumn. The early results are pleasing and show that we have found a formula for engaging with employers. In addition we are of the view that mentoring is the most effective activity to use in this situation.

E-mentoring for students in "cool spot" schools in rural North Yorkshire

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher North Yorkshire

Contact details

Susan Balf

Mentor Co-ordinator

01904 693632

susan@nybep.org.uk

The aim of the programme is to improve organisational and communication skills in order to raise achievement

Background and context

The e-mentoring project was developed to extend the opportunity for students in rural secondary schools in North Yorkshire to have the benefit of a mentor. North Yorkshire Business and Education Partnership (NYBEP) already facilitates face-to-face mentoring programmes throughout York and North Yorkshire. We wanted to find ways to involve university students and business partners in a time-efficient way to support school students in rural secondary schools, encouraging the Aimhigher aims.

Description of the activity

The e-mentoring programme sets out to support Year 10 and Year 12 secondary school students with a mentor from either the University of York or local business, who will e-mail regularly on a range of topics. The aim of the programme is to improve organisational and communication skills in order to raise achievement, talk over future plans, give some support with decisions about FE and HE applications and to empower students to problem-solve, target-set and action-plan. In some cases we have recruited mentors from specific university courses or business backgrounds where the school student already has a career path in mind. Otherwise the mentors are designed to be aspirational role models in either HE or business.

We have signed up 7 schools throughout North Yorkshire to take part, after running a small-scale pilot project with 1 school. Guidelines have been produced for school co-ordinators, mentors and school students to help them understand the programme and how to undertake a mentoring relationship by e-mail. Schools have decided which group of students they wish to target and how many. NYBEP does a short presentation to the school students about what the programme is about to ensure their full commitment, and parental permission is also sought to take part.

NYBEP have recruited, undertaken the enhanced CRB check and trained the mentors before placing them with a school. Matching is undertaken jointly by the school and NYBEP. Mentors visit the school at the beginning of their mentoring placement to meet the teacher co-ordinator and then be introduced to their student, thereafter we recommend a meeting each term and all other contact is by e-mail.

How the activity made a difference

We currently have 5 schools up and running with 44 students and a further 2 schools currently identifying students to take part

We currently have 5 schools up and running with 44 students and a further 2 schools currently identifying students to take part. The programme has been running fully for this academic year 2004-05, so as yet we do not have a full year of activity to evaluate. There has been ongoing discussion throughout this period with the schools, businesses and University of York to look at ways to improve the programme. NYBEP will be evaluating the first academic year with the school students, mentors and the schools, also asking the schools about any improvement in attainment and intention to progress to FE/HE.

At present the schools where Year 10 students are being mentored include this activity in a class situation, encouraging them to read and reply to their mentor's e-mails. The schools that have Year 12 students participating allow them to contact their mentors whenever they have free time to access computers. We are currently finding that there is more e-mail traffic between Year 10 students and their mentors than the Year 12 students, who need to be reminded more often.

Subsequent or ongoing work

We have recently bought into an off-the-shelf web-based e-mail system that will make generating e-mail addresses, monitoring and archiving e-mails and checking e-mail traffic much easier.

Initially this programme was using a school e-mail address and the mentor's university or business e-mail address to facilitate contact. However this proved to be too difficult to monitor and archive, so a web-based solution has recently been found and is currently being implemented.

The mentor/student relationship takes longer to build a rapport by e-mail and there seems to be no way of predicting so far which pairings work quickly and which need more support and guidance.

Focus Ambassador Project

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Central London

Contact details

John Keeley

Central London Partnership
Administrator

0207 911 5000 ext 3929

clp@westminster.ac.uk

Background and context

This Aimhigher Central London Partnership covers the local authority areas of Camden, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster. It is characterised by areas of extreme wealth and high participation in higher education existing very close to areas of poverty and low participation in higher education. It is also characterised by the presence of a large number of higher education institutions (HEIs) which are involved in the partnership:

Birkbeck College

University College London

School of Oriental and African Studies

City University

Kings College London

University of the Arts

University of Westminster

London Metropolitan University

Royal Veterinary College

Central School of Speech and Drama

The Focus Ambassador Project originally existed before Aimhigher became involved and started to support the work. For the Aimhigher Partnership the aim of the project is to give students in higher education institutions in the partnership the opportunity to work with young people in schools and colleges to assist in achieving Aimhigher aims and objectives. The project works with young people from Year 9 to Year 13 in all the boroughs within central London.

Description of the activity

The distinctive and innovative feature of the project is the number of participating HEIs

> The distinctive and innovative feature of the project is the number of participating HEIs. The following institutions all recruit students to participate in the project:

University College London

School of Oriental and African Studies

City University

Kings College London

University of the Arts

University of Westminster

London Metropolitan University

Royal Veterinary College

The students are trained centrally and the training covers the range of the Ambassador role they may have to fulfil, as well as the key aspects of the Ambassador role including child protection issues, working with children, and the structure of the UK educational system (a significant percentage of Ambassadors were not educated in the UK through all

The advantage of participation from such a diverse range of institutions is the breadth and range of activity that can be offered to schools and colleges in the area



or some of their pre-HE educational career). Each HEI then develops a programme of activity with schools and colleges in the partnership. The advantage of participation from such a diverse range of institutions is the breadth and range of activity that can be offered to schools and colleges in the area. The project is managed by a steering group which provides a mechanism for developing co-ordination across activities provided by partner institutions. It also provides a forum for exchange of good practice.

How the activity made a difference

In 2004-05, the project has worked with over 1700 young people and with 12 schools and colleges in the partnership. Over 180 students were trained by the partnership.

A key aspect of the Focus Ambassador Project has been the promotion and development of partnership working and collaboration. The Aimhigher Central London Partnership is unique in the number of Higher Education Institutions within in it. The Focus Ambassador Project, by concentrating on an area of work that all partners can contribute to relatively easily, has been a crucial tool in creating a basis for the partnership to develop other areas of partnership activity.

The project has had a clear impact on aspirations regarding higher education and on attainment of participants. An excellent example of this impact is the work of City University with Year 12 AS & AVCE students in the area. Senior staff at the schools and colleges worked with have identified discernible improvements in attainment as a result of the ongoing mentoring relationships forged between the Focus Ambassadors and their students.

In 2004-05, the project has worked with over 1700 young people and with 12 schools and colleges in the partnership

Senior staff at the schools and colleges worked with have identified discernible improvements in attainment as a result of the ongoing mentoring relationships

Subsequent or ongoing work

It is intended that the project will continue its range of work with schools and colleges but also that its work will link increasingly closely to the other centrally-driven work in the Central London Partnership, and the priorities of individual schools and colleges. The way in which the Focus Ambassador Project is constructed creates the potential to embed particular pieces of work in practice, and disseminate it across a range of institutions by training the Ambassadors to deliver centrally-developed materials. A particular example is the training of Ambassadors to deliver learning materials which address progression to higher education in vocational areas which have been developed through the central team.

Developing the student resource

Aimhigher Area

The Peninsula area partnership:
South West region

Contact details

Michelle Austin

The College of St Mark and St John

01752 636700 ext 8214

maustin@marjon.ac.uk

Background and context

In Devon, Cornwall and Somerset, the distance to the nearest HEI can be considerable and poor transport infrastructure compounds the issue by increasing travelling times. Against this background, higher education is remote from people's experience. From these communities, very few young people progress to university and successful graduates rarely return to provide living examples of the benefits of higher education. Very often, school students do not consider educational progression even when their GCSE and A-level results indicate that they have the ability to succeed in higher education.

Description of the activity

The five HEIs and 12 FE colleges in Devon, Cornwall and the south of Somerset have been working in partnership to widen participation in higher education since 2000. The partnership has developed an incremental programme of activities including taster events, theatre performances, residential experiences on HE campuses and visits to schools. HE students drawn from across the Peninsula area have been trained to engage young people in the activities and to deliver the programme. They act as role models and can raise awareness and aspirations so that young people receive clear information about the range of HE opportunities and appreciate that HE can be a realistic option for them.

HE student ambassadors are... living role models showing young people, their teachers and their parents/carers what it is possible for 'people like them' to achieve



HE student ambassadors are ideally placed to deliver this message. They are living role models showing young people, their teachers and their parents/carers what it is possible for 'people like them' to achieve. They can talk from experience about studying in HE, the demands of the course, ways of financing their studies, the social life and the opportunities that HE can offer. They are relatively close to the school students in terms of age and yet they have progressed to a different stage in the education system, one that seems remote from the school experience. When they return to these communities and share their experiences with young people, the ambassadors are transmitting a message that middle-class young people receive informally from friends and other family members such as their parents, sisters, brothers and cousins. The message is particularly powerful because it is coming from messengers who are talking from their own lived experience.

the ambassadors are transmitting a message that middle-class young people receive informally from friends and other family members

How the activity made a difference

The use of trained student ambassadors makes a difference to the school students, to the HE student ambassadors and to the sustainability of the programme.

School students: student ambassadors play a significant role in raising young people's aspirations to progress to higher education. At the beginning of a taster event only 31 per cent of participants indicated that they wanted to go to university; this had increased to 82 per cent after meeting the student ambassadors and taking part in their activities. The qualitative evidence demonstrates the important role the student ambassadors played in facilitating this change. One school student commented that:

"Meeting the students was fun. They weren't snobby and they speak the truth about university in our language."

HE student ambassadors: the advantages of the student ambassador scheme extended beyond the school-based participants to the ambassadors themselves. They were able to

using trained student ambassadors drawn from the target groups increases the effectiveness of the Peninsula programme in both the short and long-term

earn money to support their studies, to receive training that improved their self-confidence and transferable skills and to feel that their own experiences were valued and validated by the institution, reinforcing their sense of belonging to the academic community. Questionnaire evidence showed that 60 per cent of student ambassadors considered that working as an ambassador had assisted their academic study. One respondent commented that:

"the scheme... has made me understand myself and my abilities and how to use them".

The Programme: using trained student ambassadors drawn from the target groups increases the effectiveness of the Peninsula programme in both the short and long-term. In the short-term, school students benefit from the role model effect, but in the longer-term the training and experience will help the ambassadors to move into graduate positions when they enter the labour market. As they build successful careers, their lives will demonstrate the difference HE can make and they will provide living examples of the benefits of HE to those that follow them from these remote rural and coastal communities.

Subsequent or ongoing work

Student ambassadors have proved to be a very flexible and valuable resource for widening participation activities. The Peninsula programme has developed a suite of roles for HE students ranging from ambassador to mentor and tutor. These different roles enable the ambassadors to develop their skills incrementally and take on responsibility as they progress through the programme. This enhances their training and work experience with benefits for their move into the labour market and long-term career progression.

The Aimhigher Hertfordshire Peer Mentoring Scheme

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Hertfordshire

Contact details

Jill Cochrane

University of Hertfordshire

Aimhigher Mentoring

Co-ordinator

01707 285227

J.Cochrane@herts.ac.uk

develop a Peer Mentoring scheme for students or potential students with disability issues

Mentors would also be able to assist potential HE students to identify the specific support that would be available to them

Background and context

To tackle lower-than-average higher education participation levels for those with disabilities the Aimhigher Team was keen to develop a Peer Mentoring scheme for students or potential students with disability issues.

A number of mentoring schemes had already been established to run in schools using University of Hertfordshire (UH) undergraduates and, in view of this, a number of requests had been made to provide UH mentors to assist sixth form students with disabilities by both the Hertfordshire Careers Service and Connexions.

The UH Counselling Service had also recognized the potential need for students with mental health difficulties to have additional support, such as that given by a mentor. It was agreed to combine the efforts of both departments and develop a Peer Mentoring programme to offer to any student or potential student with either a mental health difficulty or physical disability.

Description of the activity

The scheme was run as a pilot in 2004, facilitated by staff from the University's Counselling Service and Aimhigher, and was funded jointly by the UH Equality Unit and AimHigher (P4P). Due to the success of the scheme it was again funded in 2005 by the Equality Unit and the integrated Aimhigher through the Hertfordshire Mentoring Activity Group.

A total of six mentors was trained in the first year and the number trained increased to 15 in the second year. In addition to these new mentors three of the previous year's cohort requested that they take part again. The core mentor training is delivered over two full days in a range of issues including stress, study problems, physical and mental health difficulties. Mentors would also be able to assist potential HE students to identify the specific support that would be available to them. All mentors are given guidelines on child protection issues as part of the training.

Fortnightly Support Group meetings are used both to allow potential difficulties in the mentoring relationship to be explored before escalating and as training sessions as necessary to explore in more depth specific difficulties such as study skills, exam preparation, dyslexia and mental health difficulties as they emerge during the mentoring relationship. The support group is considered an essential part of the scheme and addresses observations about the insufficiency of support given to mentors in other national schemes in the past.

Potential mentees were identified through Connexions, the Hertfordshire Careers Service, the Lifelong Learning Centre (Career Options), and the UH Student Counselling and Disability Services, as well as self-referrals through notices on the University intranet.

After careful consideration and much discussion between the Mentoring Coordinators, mentors are matched to a mentee using a number of criteria. The preferences of both the mentor and mentee were taken into consideration: age (i.e. matching more mature mentees with older mentors), home addresses and the courses the students were studying or hoping to study. Additional factors taken into account include the psychological maturity and robustness of the mentors, parity of interests and cultural factors.

Mentees this year have a range of disabilities from Asperger's to dyslexia and depression. In the case of one potential HE student, the mentoring process is being conducted by e-mail as the 6th form pupil/mentee is visually impaired and does not attend a local school, making face-to-face meetings difficult.

To accommodate potential HE students who are not local to the University or for some other reason may find face-to-face meetings difficult, e-mentoring software has been purchased. This allows mentor and mentee to communicate without exchanging their personal e-mail addresses and for the content of all messages to be screened for inappropriate language.

How the activity made a difference

Mentees have expressed high levels of satisfaction with the scheme and it has, arguably, ensured that some participants have been encouraged to make the step into higher education

> Mentees have expressed high levels of satisfaction with the scheme and it has, arguably, ensured that some participants have been encouraged to make the step into higher education or have been supported to remain when they might otherwise have withdrawn.

Mentees have said about the Peer Mentoring Scheme:

'A mentor should be able to listen, understand and most significantly must inspire and motivate the potential of the mentee so that, when the scheme is finished, the mentee can solve most of the issues themselves – my mentor has all these skills and I have learned them from him'.

'I think that few people would like to admit that they have mental health problems even if they are under great pressure, and fewer tend to solve their problems by seeking help from someone else. It is hard to tell whether one has such problems because they seem apparently confident'.

'I got to know someone else's perspective about university life'.

The experience was also positive for mentors:

'I have a great deal of satisfaction that I have been able to make a difference to someone, however small that might be.'

'Helping my mentee to become more organised has helped me to organise myself better'.

'A mentor should be able to listen, understand and most significantly must inspire and motivate the potential of the mentee... my mentor has all these skills and I have learned them from him'

Subsequent or ongoing work

A Hertfordshire Mentoring Network website has been developed and will be launched on 24th May at Delta House, Letchworth. The website is intended to allow both mentees and mentors to locate appropriate mentoring schemes in their locality and for practitioners to share best practice.

It is hoped that the Peer Mentoring Scheme will continue to receive both Aimhigher funding and the support of the Equality Unit as the benefits for those taking part have been quite apparent.

Aimhigher e-evolve@neba

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Nottinghamshire

Contact details

Brenda Thomas

Project Manager

01623 404345

Elizabeth Tomlin

**Aimhigher Development
Manager**

0115 848 4441

elizabeth.tomlin@ntu.ac.uk

Website

www.neba.info

helps to develop self-awareness and raise self-esteem and provides pupils with positive role models

Background and context

Aimhigher e-evolve@neba is an e-mentoring programme that links pupils in Key Stage 4 with a mentor from a local university or business. It is delivered through a partnership arrangement between Aimhigher Nottinghamshire and Nottinghamshire Education Business Alliance (NEBA).

Nottinghamshire faces a number of challenges including social exclusion and deprivation in parts of the city and in some rural and former coalfield areas where there is a history of low educational achievement and motivation to succeed. The programme targets pupils who are gifted and talented and those from a widening participation cohort. It can be used as a vital support mechanism to enable learners to connect different experiences and achievements, opportunities and employment outcomes. It also helps to develop self-awareness and raise self-esteem and provides pupils with positive role models.

Description of the activity

Aimhigher e-evolve@neba is an enterprising communications project which aims to help pupils manage change through developing their life skills, building their confidence and providing an inspiring insight into higher education and the world of work.

The project is running in two strands. The first uses graduate volunteer mentors from businesses, the second undergraduate volunteers from the University of Nottingham. Both target young people from Years 10–12 who will benefit most from the additional support and encouragement that a mentor can offer.

All participants complete an initial profile to assist with the matching of partners with similar interests. Mentor and mentee make a commitment to exchange e-mails weekly for a specified period of time. The mentor is able to support pupils by:

- promoting the benefits of higher education;
- sharing reasons for entering higher education and for graduate careers;
- discussing any barriers faced/overcome in order to enter higher education;
- promoting lifelong learning;
- raising awareness of life as a student and as an employee;
- providing the mentee with the opportunity to share any concerns or issues they might have, such as coping with exam stress or pressure to leave school;
- enhancing writing skills and ICT; and
- helping to prepare for the world of work.

There are many benefits for schools and their pupils because the project:

- can be organised relatively quickly electronically;
- knows no barriers in terms of gender, race, age or disability;
- can offer work with established companies and organisations;
- can be provided for a large number of pupils irrespective of geographical location;
- develops strategies to use problem-solving and decision-making techniques;
- raises skills levels in communication technology;
- enhances writing skills and fluency: writing for a purpose.

Adult volunteers also benefit because the programme:

- enables volunteers to make a contribution to the community;

- encourages accurate or more creative use of e-mail;
- enables mentors to acquire coaching skills;
- promotes lifelong learning;
- helps potential employees to understand a business.

This programme is highly regarded by many of the participants because it allows for complete flexibility. E-mails are sent and received via a secure, encrypted, web-based system which is monitored daily by members of staff at NEBA. All e-mails can be read by individual school co-ordinators and the NEBA Project Manager and are retained for a full 10 years for accountability purposes. Volunteers and co-ordinators are all CRB-checked to enhanced level.

How the activity made a difference

already over 100 e-mentoring partnerships have been established

> Aimhigher e-volve@neba has been in operation since November 2004 and already over 100 e-mentoring partnerships have been established. A total of 679 emails have been exchanged so far between mentors and mentees. The positive impact on the participants is illustrated through the following quotes:

From mentees to mentors:

"The problem with people my age is that we think we're the only people who are going through it all, we never take into consideration that you've been down the road we're travelling."

"When I leave school I want to go to college to do A-levels then go to Nottingham University doing site management."

From mentors to mentees:

"Good to hear from you – sounds like you've thought about what you want to do with your life and having a balance between having fun and wanting to work hard to create your own business."

"My parents weren't too involved in my learning... I hope I can help you."

Comments from mentors:

"I didn't have this sort of support when I was at school and I'm pretty certain I would have taken a different route had I communicated with a mentor."

"I feel more confident with supporting others and believe my coaching skills at work have improved as a result."

Comments from teachers:

"It's been really helpful for her to have someone other than an authority figure to talk things through with."

"I like the idea of matching the pupil profiles to the mentor profiles. It ensures a good match of interests as well as the academic similarities."

"I've been really pleased with the ongoing support from NEBA. It's made a huge difference knowing there was someone there to help with any problems."

It is clear that the initiative will help to improve awareness and aspirations of the pupils

There are currently 11 secondary schools involved in the project with the prospect of a further 4 joining this academic year

Subsequent or ongoing work

It is clear that the initiative will help to improve awareness and aspirations of the pupils. By working with a specific target group it should also be possible to assess positive impact on their attainment and hopefully subsequent progression to higher education. There are currently 11 secondary schools involved in the project with the prospect of a further 4 joining this academic year, and interest has been expressed by another 7 schools.

Students into Schools, Colleges, Community (SiS)

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Tyne and Wear

Contact details

Jim Wood

0191 222 7795

Jim.Wood@ncl.ac.uk

Web addresses

www.newcastle.ac.uk/sis

www.northumbria.ac.uk/sis

www.newcastle.ac.uk/partners

Background and context

A joint initiative involving undergraduate students from Newcastle University and Northumbria University to attempt to address historically-low post-16 participation in education in Tyneside and Northumberland:

- established in 1993 in partnership with Tyneside Training and Enterprise Council;
- students undertake short-term placements in schools and colleges and with community education providers;
- Aim #1 is to increase the educational achievement and aspirations of pupils and other learners;
- Aim #2 is to recognise and enhance the employability of undergraduates;
- targets vary from year to year e.g. over 1000 undergraduates have been involved in various programmes in 2004/05;
- tutoring and mentoring are considered to be related activities, where tutoring is similar to teaching and mentoring is similar to befriending.

Description of the activity

Undergraduate students work as tutors and mentors, helping pupils and adult learners with their studies and encouraging them to aim higher. A typical placement will comprise 10 half or whole days in successive weeks over one or two semesters.

There are a number of different programmes which student can undertake in 2004/05, including:

- tutoring and mentoring for academic credit;
- community volunteering for academic credit;
- student management;
- paid mentoring (Aim Higher National Mentoring Scheme);
- paid tutoring (Student Associates Aimhigher pilot).

> Altogether in 2004/05, over 1000 students have undertaken tutoring and mentoring in over 180 different placements. The websites provide further information on the programmes and the placements.

In addition, over 2000 pupils have attended ACE and other related campus-based events which are supported by the undergraduates involved in the other SiS work.

How the activity made a difference

Teachers and other placement supervisors value the contribution made by the undergraduates and have continued to request tutors and mentors since the work began in 1993, with over 7000 students involved to date. Similarly, University supervisors recognise the value in offering optional modules to their students thus ensuring a regular supply of enthusiastic and committed role models for pupils and other learners in the community.

All students collect evaluation data from pupils that indicates how they have made an impact on raising achievement and aspirations. Teachers also provide feedback on how they feel that the students have made a difference.

Altogether in 2004/05, over 1000 students have undertaken tutoring and mentoring in over 180 different placements

All students collect evaluation data from pupils that indicates how they have made an impact on raising achievement and aspirations

"By the end he said he was now considering university"

>

Comments from a representative case study have been included below to illustrate the impact students make on the local community. This case study, and others, was included in a portfolio presented to Newcastle City Councillors by the Vice-Chancellors of Newcastle and Northumbria Universities in March 2005 as part of ongoing discussion about the positive and negative impact of students within the local community.

Ryan Land raised awareness of and aspiration to higher education at All Saints College in Newcastle. He was one of 10 student tutors plus a student manager who were allocated to this placement as part of the College's special relationship with the University that includes research, professional development for teachers, initial teacher training opportunities and enhanced activities linked to widening participation.

As part of his evaluation of the impact on students, Ryan wrote that:

"On the PARTNERS (see website) shadowing day I led a group of 3 pupils around campus. One of them wasn't sure about going to university, as he didn't know what career he wanted to do. I explained that it is important to do a degree in something that you find interesting, and I got him a copy of the prospectus and pointed out interesting degrees when we had a coffee in the Union. By the end he said he was now considering university."

As part of Ryan's evaluation of skills gained, he wrote:

"Before I started this placement I had decided that I wanted to go into teaching as a career, teaching secondary ICT, and I hoped that this would give me a good insight into teaching as well as improving the pupils' aspirations. I can say that the experiences I got from this placement only reinforced my determination to become a teacher as I found the whole experience very rewarding."

Subsequent or ongoing work

All programmes have evolved over time to implement quality improvements as well as in response to funding opportunities. The introduction of Community Volunteering for academic credit in partnership with Student Community Action Newcastle (see case study 3) in 2003/04 is relatively unique in the UK and was initially developed within the Higher Education Active Community Fund. For 2005/06, one major development will be the introduction of e-mentoring to complement face-to-face tutoring and mentoring in some of the programmes. In the longer term, an electronic placement system is under development with the aim of allowing more fine-tuning in placing student tutors and mentors to meet local needs.

E-mentoring in Healthcare: working with the Brightside Trust

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher West partnership:
South West region

Contact details

Fleur McCrone
Project Manager
The Brightside Trust
020 8543 2427

fleur.mccrone@thebrightsidetrust.org

Charlotte Wilson
Student Task Group Co-ordinator
Aimhigher West
0117 331 7257
charlotte.wilson@bristol.ac.uk

Zoë Pither
Mentoring and Tutoring
Co-ordinator
University of Bristol
0117 331 7550
zoe.pither@bristol.ac.uk

Sarah Hendrick
Mentoring and Tutoring
Co-ordinator
University of the West of England
0117 328 3527
sarah.Hendrick@uwe.ac.uk

Website

www.brightjournals.org

School pupils are paired with volunteer undergraduates studying medicine or related disciplines

Background and context

Aimhigher West is working in partnership with the Brightside Trust on Bright Journals, an e-mentoring project. The Brightside Trust has been funded from the national level of Aimhigher to work with institutions and partnerships to provide mentors for students in state schools who are interested in becoming health professionals. The Universities of Bristol and of the West of England currently co-ordinate 44 student mentors working with 108 mentees in 15 schools and one FE College across the Bristol area.

The e-mentoring project operates in Bristol, Bath, Wiltshire, Swindon, Gloucestershire and North Somerset. Attainment in Bristol's state schools is significantly below the national average. Only 35% of young people achieved 5 A*-C at GCSE compared with a national average of 54%. Local statistics also indicate that medicine and dentistry programmes at a local university only draw in 6.6% of their cohort from manual backgrounds and 5.3% from low-participation areas. Against this background, the project is working in an environment with plenty of scope for raising aspirations and promoting progression.

The Bright Journals national project aims to facilitate communication between HE student mentors and pupils in state schools so that young people are provided with information, advice and guidance about their progression towards their goal of becoming a healthcare professional. School pupils are paired with volunteer undergraduates studying medicine or related disciplines. Mentors act as role models, sharing their experiences and guiding them through the application process and the stresses of exams. The target group for the project is young people aged 14 -19, attending a state school or FE college, who are interested in becoming health professionals. They will often be the first person in their family to consider HE, so their peers and relatives may not have the answers to all of their questions about university life.

Description of the activity

Bright Journals is a welcoming online environment where young people can build their confidence and learn about the opportunities available to them. The mentoring relationship takes place through weblog style interactive journals. Participants can access their own journal and that of their mentor or mentee. This system means that a mentor can easily maintain a relationship with up to four mentees. The journal format allows for reflective entries, as well as more focussed questions and answers. Mentors can choose to direct a question to all of their mentees or to have personal discussions with individuals in their journals.

As well as the journals, the website has an impressive resource library where mentors and mentees can access information on choosing and applying to university, student life and careers in healthcare. This area is constantly being expanded and people are invited to point out gaps and suggest any useful resources they would like to see included.

In addition to the permanent resources, there are two types of 'timed content', which help inspire discussion between mentors and mentees. The first is topical news stories and alerts. These can relate to events in the academic year, such as UCAS application deadlines or current science and health stories. At the end of each story, a theme or idea is pulled out as a suggested talking point for the journal entries. University co-ordinators are also able to submit new alerts, which they can direct to the whole community or just to students at their institution.

special features only available to mentors and co-ordinators to make sure that they receive ongoing support in their job

> There are a number of special features only available to mentors and co-ordinators to make sure that they receive ongoing support in their job. A specially designed ten-module online mentor training programme is there to reinforce any offline training mentors receive and should give mentors the sense that they are developing a valuable skill, as well as doing something worthwhile.

Mentors are also invited to discuss any challenges or breakthroughs they experience with their fellow mentors (from the same academic institution) in an online forum. Finally, Bright Journals has a nationwide networking and problem-solving area for the people implementing the scheme. University and Aimhigher co-ordinators can come along and discuss their role - from recruiting mentors and mentees to different training methods. Monthly virtual coffee mornings are held on the forum to help inspire the idea of a national e-mentoring community.

Bright Journals is a welcoming online environment where young people can build their confidence and learn about the opportunities available to them

How the activity made a difference

At national level 473 mentees and 327 mentors are currently using Bright Journals.

At area level, the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England in the Aimhigher West partnership have 44 mentors and 108 mentees signed up on Bright Journals. A total of 15 schools and 1 college are involved.

Site monitoring shows that the range of topics discussed is wide and includes questions about work experience, careers, advice on exam revision, and general advice on HE.

National statistics from February to March 2005 indicate that page views increased by 36%, mentor/mentee logins by 42%/45% and mentor/mentee journal posts by 35%/57%.

The total number of logins is higher than journal posts demonstrating that mentors and mentees are looking at the site but not necessarily posting a message. This statistic indicates that they are viewing other areas of Bright Journals, such as the library and news area, forum and training programme (just for mentors).

44 mentors and 108 mentees signed up on Bright Journals

Subsequent or ongoing work

Positive feedback from teachers has identified a need for a teacher forum within the site. This is now under consideration. Teachers involved with the scheme have also asked to supplement the work using the website with visits to the Universities and Aimhigher days.

This project has been set up as an 18-month scheme, supporting Year 12 students into Year 13. We intend to recruit a second cohort of students in September to ensure a rolling programme. We would also like to extend the project into other subject areas using a similar website to the Bright Journals. We have found the website to be user-friendly and easy to monitor.

We intend to recruit a second cohort of students in September to ensure a rolling programme

Student Link Mentoring Programme

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Kent & Medway

Contact details

Lesley Chater

Aimhigher Kent & Medway
Project Officer

01227 824149

L.E.Chater@kent.ac.uk

it is widely recognised that mentoring is most effective when taking place alongside other activities as part of a whole-school approach

Following its success the programme was extended to schools in Ashford and Shepway

Background and context

Recent government proposals in the 14-19 White Paper state that 11-16 schools will increasingly become accountable for the progression routes their students take. In due course, schools will therefore need to demonstrate what action they are taking in relation to progression.

Aimhigher Kent & Medway has developed a pioneering project which is changing attitudes to progression in Year 11 students in Aimhigher target schools without sixth form provision. The Link Programme brings together these students with sixth formers from grammar schools and further education colleges and facilitates a range of aspiration-raising activities.

Peer mentoring is the main strand of the project. However, it is widely recognised that mentoring is most effective when taking place alongside other activities as part of a whole-school approach. To support this, the programme enables students to take part in workshops, receive additional advice and guidance and to participate in structured FE/HE visit days.

The programme fosters links between local schools and facilitates the transition for students at sixth form level. It contributes to the citizenship curriculum and social inclusion agendas of participating schools. It provides opportunities for Link students to gain new skills and supports personal development. Students have opportunities to reflect on their learning and to develop a greater awareness of opportunities beyond GCSE including study at a higher level and career pathways.

In order to be most effective, it is envisaged that the Link Programme will be part of a whole-school approach promoting a positive and supportive ethos which fosters inclusion and stimulates personal and academic development.

Description of the activity

The Link Programme was piloted in 2003/4 in wards with high deprivation and low HE participation. The mentoring activity involved students from the sixth form in two grammar schools, acting as mentors, and students currently in Year 10 in two non-selective schools without sixth form provision. The sixth formers worked in small groups with the Year 10 students. Acting as role models, they provided information on life in the sixth form and led discussions about learning, study skills and progression opportunities. Whilst the main aim of the Link Programme is to raise achievement and progression, there should also be considerable benefits for those acting as peer mentors.

A programme of enhancement activities supports the Link meetings – these include workshops aimed at confidence building; skills-or subject-led sessions; progression research and guidance; and visits to local FE colleges and HE institutions. As part of these workshops students also have opportunities to work alongside undergraduates.

Following its success the programme was extended to schools in Ashford and Shepway. In Ashford, the local FEC was also involved enabling Year 11 pupils to mix with school 6th form students and FE vocational students.

How the activity made a difference

The evaluation of the project focuses on progression, aspiration, attainment and the personal development of the students involved. Feedback from programme co-ordinators stressed the extent to which the programme had enhanced the personal development of the students involved. By the end of the programme students were found to have improved communication, organisational and time-management skills. The issue of responsibility was also highlighted, with co-ordinators noting how students had increasingly taken charge of their own organisation.

When asked about the overall benefits of the programme one school co-ordinator said:

"It offered students individual development, certainly. It has been a chance to take on a leadership role that would not have been available or taken up by some of the participants within school."

When asked what they enjoyed about the programme, mentees have said that:

"it was interesting, gave me positive thoughts towards the future such as preparing for my GCSEs and then what to do afterwards"

"I really hadn't thought about study in a sixth form or at college but now I'm definitely looking at courses and planning on more study."

When asked how they had benefited from taking part in the programme mentors' comments included:

"I have benefited from improving my communication skills and working in a team."

"Improved reliability and time-management skills. Improved planning skills and coming up with ideas for different meetings. Helped me think personally about future aims etc."

Roger Silk, Deputy Head of The Hereson School, Broadstairs, involved in the pilot, was particularly pleased that the programme had inspired a debate about Year 12 study and progression across the whole year group in the boys' school. Figures show that it can be particularly difficult to engage teenage boys in low participation wards. In fostering links with the local boys' grammar there are now real expectations for improved progression this year.

Subsequent or ongoing work

Progress has been made with embedding the Link Programme, as responsibility for co-ordinating individual programmes in Thanet, Shepway and Ashford is currently devolving to Aimhigher Cluster Learning Mentors. This process has already been completed in Shepway. Aimhigher will retain a central management role and oversee quality control and data collection for research and evaluation purposes.

In working towards accreditation for Year 10/11 Link students, the programme also aims to offer students the opportunity for accrediting a number of additional activities not directly part of the Link Programme. These activities and units would be based upon those developed in the Medway Plus Offer. It is hoped that students achieving Link Programme credit will be able to submit this credit to universities as part of a future Kent Compact agreement.

The programme has already been disseminated to other Aimhigher sub-regions in the south-east and has generated considerable interest. Several sub-regions have indicated that they are keen to roll out the programme. All of the schools involved in the current programmes in Thanet, Shepway and Ashford are keen to expand to include more schools and more links with FE colleges. Plans for expansion will continue over the coming year. A full evaluation and report on the first two years of the Programme will be available in December 2005.

The programme has already been disseminated to other Aimhigher sub-regions in the south-east and has generated considerable interest

Raising Achievement and Aspirations through Volunteer Business Mentors

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher West Yorkshire

Contact details

Barry Hilton

Manager

Leeds Mentoring

0113 2144080

barry.hilton@educationleeds.co.uk

The Leeds Mentoring Aimhigher project is an integral part of Education Leeds Aimhigher school improvement initiative

"Mentoring has meant so much to me. It has made me reflect on what I have done and achieved – I am now a school governor and want to become a teacher"

Background and context

The Leeds Mentoring Aimhigher project is an integral part of the Education Leeds Aimhigher school improvement initiative. It recruits, trains and places business mentors to support Widening Participation students. The project targets 14 – 19 year old high school and further education college students who have ability but may lack the support, motivation or drive to achieve their full potential. Mentors are recruited from a wide range of backgrounds including cross-sector employees, staff and students from local universities and colleges and retired citizens.

Mentor support is offered to all 41 Leeds High Schools and 8 Further Education Colleges. Together, mentors and mentees agree SMART targets/goals which are focussed on raising aspirations and attainment, with the ultimate aim of progression into higher education. Mentors and mentees meet regularly for a minimum of one year. Mentors are trained in mentoring and motivational skills and techniques and become positive role models. Currently 2,500 students are receiving volunteer mentor support.

Description of the activity

Example: Julie Lawton, an administrator with Deloitte & Touche in Leeds, had previously mentored individual students at a West Leeds inner city school. Working with Leeds Mentoring, the mentor co-ordinator at West Leeds identified a group of four Year 10 female students who she felt would benefit from mentoring. The students were assigned to Julie at the start of Year 10. At the time the students had little direction and were each predicted to achieve between 3 or 4 GCSE passes at Grades A–C. The school felt that a mentor might help them to achieve more. At the start of the partnership, Julie and the students received mentor training/induction including the aims and objectives of Aimhigher.

How the activity made a difference

After 2 years of mentoring all four students achieved between 9–11 GCSE passes at Grades A–C. Julie had motivated and challenged them and made them believe in themselves. Two students are in the 6th form at West Leeds and two are studying at a local Further Education college and all are applying to university.

Julie's story: "Initially I met my students once a month but as our relationship developed meetings became weekly. During the first meetings I worked to establish the mentees' learning needs and then drew up a programme to help them gain confidence and believe in themselves. Targets were negotiated as a group and we all supported each other. The strengths were working as a team and supporting each other. They were all at the same academic level and I felt that they wanted to achieve and were grateful that I could provide them with some quality time. I encouraged the girls to talk and explored what they wanted. Rewards included off-site visits to my company, and to local FE colleges and universities. These created strong bonds and helped raise aspirations. It also enabled me to set realistic targets which they could work towards.

Student 1: "The highlight was our visits to local colleges and universities – this raised my aspirations and made me realise how important it was to achieve 5 grade A–C GCSE grades. Julie stressed the serious nature of achievement and how it opens doors – she

"She was an inspiration. I can never repay her for what she has done and how much it has changed my life"

> always stretched us and I was really proud to achieve for Julie. I did it for her. She was an inspiration. I can never repay her for what she has done and how much it has changed my life."

Student 2: "Julie gave me the confidence and challenged me to turn a predicted grade G into a grade C – I did and would never have achieved this without Julie's support. I would not have attended the after-school revision classes without the support of Julie and the others."

Impact in Leeds: 75% of mentored students met or overachieved their Fischer Family Trust GCSE point targets. This rose to 83% for Black and Minority Ethnic students.

Subsequent or ongoing work

Julie: "Mentoring has meant so much to me. It has made me reflect on what I have done and achieved – I am now a school governor and want to become a teacher. Because of mentoring I am a better person and have developed a range of new personal development skills. It also opened doors to a Mentoring Diploma and studying for a degree. I am so grateful I have been given the chance to put something back to the community." Julie has recently applied for place on a PGCE course.

All four mentored students have received mentor training from Leeds Mentoring and are now mentoring students at West Leeds High School where they will provide similar encouragement and support. "We aim to inspire our mentees in the same way that Julie has inspired us".

75% of mentored students met or overachieved their Fischer Family Trust GCSE point targets. This rose to 83% for Black and Minority Ethnic students

Working with the National Mentoring Scheme

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Derbyshire

Contact details

Dian May

Undergraduates in Schools and
Colleges Officer

01132 591813

Kryssy Hartley

Project Manager

Aimhigher Derbyshire

01132 591297

K.Hartley@derby.ac.uk

Mentors will specifically address the mentees' individual learning and development needs

gave an added drive and enthusiasm to the mentoring team

Background and context

Aimhigher Derbyshire is buying into the National Mentoring Scheme operating in selected schools throughout England and its purpose is to allow undergraduates from local universities to act as mentors in schools, providing support and encouragement to pupils. Mentors will specifically address the mentees' individual learning and development needs, seek to improve their self-confidence and study skills and introduce them to time management and goal-setting. The school co-ordinator will identify pupils who they feel would benefit from the ongoing one-to-one support given by undergraduate mentors. The programme includes target for raising aspirations and grades.

Description of the activity

Mentors are students from the University of Derby where there is strong tradition of mentoring, and undergraduates have mentoring experience, together with a mature attitude and understanding of the role of mentor. They came from different subject areas and had diverse hobbies and interests which gave an added drive and enthusiasm to the mentoring team.

Mentors are not expected to teach, but will help mentees with study skills such as time management, action planning and preparing for exams. Mentors have used and adapted study skills materials from the University Library and used various websites including Sam Learning.

Target groups are pupils between the ages of 13 and 18, but mainly Year 11 pupils, who for a variety of reasons may not be fulfilling their potential. They will be C/D borderline GCSE pupils. The programme aims to

- Raise their standards of performance in their key stage assessments and at GCSE;
- Raise their awareness of higher education opportunities;
- Draw up and implement individual learning plans including personal achievement targets and timescales for action;
- Acquire and develop study skills in order to improve their application to their studies;
- Develop greater self-esteem, motivation, confidence, persistence and application.

Four Derbyshire inner city secondary schools were chosen on the basis of previous commitment to previous Aimhigher activities.

Sinfin Community School is a medium-sized mixed comprehensive. The cultural background of the pupils is very mixed, and about 38 per cent of the pupils are of ethnic minority heritage, including some who have only recently arrived in this country, not having English as a first language.

Murray Park Foundation School is a mixed-gender comprehensive school with mainly white British students and others of Asian, Chinese, Mixed and Black heritage. Over half of the students come from an area of significant social and economic disadvantage, although 36% are from a more affluent area of Derby. There are some students to whom English is a second language. The school had an existing Aimhigher co-ordinator seeking mentor help for a homework club.

Lees Brook Community Sports College is a larger-than-average mixed-gender secondary school. Most students are white British, with small numbers of pupils from other

heritages, and none identified as having English as a second language. The college was granted Specialist Sports College status in 2001. The school has a good understanding of mentoring after three years participation in mentoring schemes.

Littleover School is Derby's only Beacon school, and a specialist Science and Mathematics College, serving an increasingly mixed social and ethnic area, and with some pupils with black and minority ethnic heritage having no role models or family background in Higher Education who would benefit from a mentor to help them. Just over 55% in the school are white British and the remainder are Chinese, Bosnian, Japanese, African Caribbean, African dual heritage.

How the activity has made a difference

As yet, these Year 11 mentees have not sat their GCSE exams so it is too early yet to assess any improvement in their examination grades. Mentees are discussing their mentors with other pupils, so there is a positive profile to the programme in the schools. I feel the scheme has contributed so much to the self-esteem and aspirations of both mentors and mentees. Mentors have been able to help mentees discover further education and think about attending university in the future which they may not have considered before.

An unexpected benefit has been that mentees who have applied for Sixth Form places at their school are more likely to gain a place, as teachers value their experience and application on the mentoring scheme.

There are many individual examples of progress due to the mentoring scheme. One example is the work of a mentor with a pupil who performs well in course work but less well in an exam situation, and the mentor has used the resources available to hopefully help that pupil do well.

Mentors have been able to help mentees discover further education and think about attending university in the future which they may not have considered before



Student Ambassador and Mentoring Training - March 2004/January 2005

Aimhigher Area

London West Aimhigher

Contact details

Madeleine King and
Jehan Khan

London West Aimhigher
020 8231 2460/0197

Madeleine.king@tvu.ac.uk

Jehan.khan@tvu.ac.uk

provides a realistic source of knowledge about the kinds of challenges they will face in higher education

nearly 100 students have been trained as student ambassadors and mentors

Students feel far more comfortable highlighting their real and perceived barriers about entering higher education with the student ambassadors

Background and context

It has been widely acknowledged that the involvement of existing students at university with Widening Participation activities enhances the experience for prospective students. It also provides a realistic source of knowledge about the kinds of challenges they will face in higher education.

Consequently, the London West Partnership allocates significant funding towards the training and ongoing payments for student ambassadors and mentors involved with Aimhigher-funded Widening Participation activity.

Description of the activity

In line with the principles of cross-partnership working, it was decided to utilise existing networks for the development of this aspect of the London West Plan. The similar Focus Ambassador Project was a comprehensive training programme already developed by the adjacent London Central Aimhigher Partnership. It made sense therefore, to utilise London West funding, nearly £10,000 over the two years, to adapt what was an already established and quality product.

The training took place over two days. One day focused on issues relating to acting as ambassadors. It familiarised prospective ambassadors with the knowledge and skills they would need to develop to succeed in such roles. The second day concentrated more on mentoring itself. It dealt with legal issues, as well potential scenarios which could emerge that student mentors would need to deal with.

How the activity made a difference

> Over the last two years, nearly 100 students have been trained as student ambassadors and mentors. Most of these students are from our partner higher education institutions (HEIs), namely Thames Valley University, Brunel, and the University of Westminster. Students from London Metropolitan University have also participated in the recent round of training. This pool of trained student ambassadors is now regularly utilised for activity funded by London West Aimhigher.

The major impact these students have is they bring a wide range of skills to Widening Participation activities. Some have excellent communication skills and are very confident giving presentations on topics or issues such as student finance, study skills, the benefits of participating in higher education, etc.

> Other student ambassadors help on the logistical side. Our recent London West Aimhigher Evaluation Report showed they usually strike up an excellent rapport with visiting students. Students feel far more comfortable highlighting their real and perceived barriers about entering higher education with the student ambassadors.

Subsequent or ongoing work

Nearly all the students trained over the last two years continue to be involved with wide-ranging Widening Participation activity. Not only does this provide excellent work experience for them, but it is also an excellent source of income.

The next major round of activity to be funded by London West Aimhigher will see the involvement of the student ambassadors with Year 12 summer schools.

E-mentoring for Health Care (Great Yarmouth NHSU Academy: Great Yarmouth Education Action Zone, Aimhigher Norfolk and the NHSU)

Aimhigher Area

Aimhigher Norfolk

Contact details

Lisa Bell

Aimhigher Norfolk Co-ordinator

01493 309678

lbell022@hotmail.com

Website

www.norfolkmentoring.co.uk

By targeting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds... the programme is designed to raise the aspirations and expectations of young people who have an interest in the health care sector

Background and context

The Gt. Yarmouth Action Zone in partnership with the NHSU and Aimhigher has developed a scheme to create new pathways to employment in the health and social care sector for young people aged 14-19 – the Great Yarmouth NHSU Academy.

The programme began in October 2003, with students taking part in activity from September 2004. It has helped to establish good practice and provide case study exemplars to support the nationwide NHSU/Aimhigher Healthcare Strand. By targeting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in local schools and colleges, the programme is designed to raise the aspirations and expectations of young people who have an interest in the health care sector but who come from a background of little or no family participation in further or higher education. This new vocational sector-specific initiative will provide, for the wide range of occupations available in the Health and Social Service Sectors, a considerably higher public profile in localities that have not traditionally supplied many recruits to these growing professions.

Description of the activity

Discussions began with partners from the Primary Care Trusts, County Social Services Departments, private and voluntary sector organisations, local schools and the College of Further Education. Through their enthusiasm and positive approach to the challenge, a rich and diverse programme has been developed for approximately 50 Year 10 students from five local high schools, and the Great Yarmouth NHSU Academy was established. In order to be part of the Academy students had to have a keen interest in following a career in a health and social care setting, be studying GCSE Health & Social Care, Applied Science or Double Science and committed to participate in out of school hours learning/activities.

Through the development of a programme of placements, job shadowing, observations, visits, mentoring and skills development, new opportunities to provide 'hands on' and relevant experiences for these students have been created. This has facilitated their transition onto courses within further and higher education institutions and ultimately leading on to a career within the National Health Service. Academy students also join with Increase Flexibility Fund students at the local college in joint events such as conferences and workshops

In January 2005 the University of East Anglia (UEA) supported the programme by providing eight HE students as e-mentors. The mentors have just completed their training and have been drawn from the UEA's School of Medicine, Health Policy and Practice; the School of Nursing and Midwifery; and the School of Allied Health Professions and will mentor 31 of the Academy students. Each mentor supports 3 or 4 students answering any questions, addressing areas of concern and providing a taste of university life. At no time do the mentee and mentor meet and all correspondence is made anonymous. After only 10 days 103 email exchanges had taken place. By the end of February 2005 214 emails were exchanged and this figure increased again in March with over 550 emails being exchanged.

How the activity made a difference

It is very early at this stage to measure any impact but certainly the Academy is having a positive effect on the students:

'The NHSU Academy has had a positive impact on the pupils who were invited to take part in the programme because of their desire to work in the care industry'

"From the age of five my ambition was to become a nurse but I struggled at school and always lacked confidence. Hopefully, being able to give young students a boost in confidence... will encourage them to aim for their dreams"

'Being a member of the Academy is fantastic. It has given me guidance to my future career' - Catherine

'It is very interesting and helpful with my studies. We have done so much including a First Aid Course and Confidentiality Training.' - Nicola

'The NHSU Academy has had a positive impact on the pupils who were invited to take part in the programme because of their desire to work in the care industry. They have been given an opportunity to explore wide range of health-related careers which has encouraged many of them to pursue otherwise unthought-of career investigations.' Louise - School Co-ordinator

"From the age of five my ambition was to become a nurse but I struggled at school and always lacked confidence. Hopefully, being able to give young students a boost in confidence and let them know that everybody has something to give will encourage them to aim for their dreams." Nursing Student Mentor

Subsequent or ongoing work

Funding through the Aimhigher healthcare strand is available to support these students for another year and it is hoped that another cohort can join the programme in September 2005.

The e-mentoring initiative is part of a new network of Norfolk mentoring schemes which was officially launched on March 11 at the UEA Sportspark.

Norfolk Mentoring Network will link UEA's mentoring schemes with the National Mentoring Network, the Eastern Mentoring Network and other business and educational mentoring projects around the county.

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