



“Widening the access and participation of disadvantaged groups in education.”

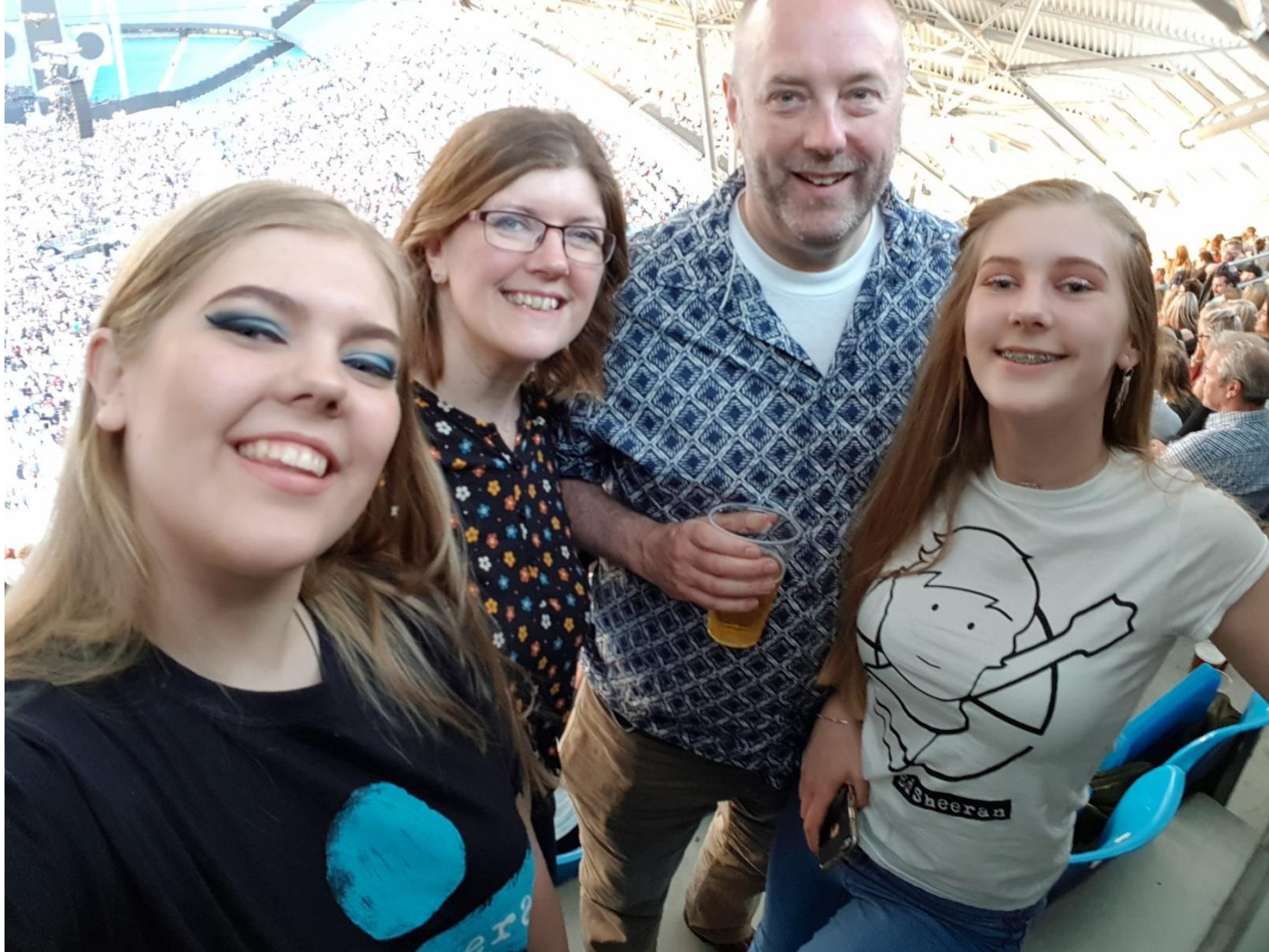
Andy Mellor  
National Association of Headteachers  
National President 2018-19

# Good Morning!

- **Headteacher**  
**St Nicholas C of E Primary School, Blackpool**  
**2003 to current day**
- **Director**  
**Blackpool Teaching School Alliance and NLE**
- **2018-19 National President**  
**National Association of Headteachers**
- **Chair**  
**Blackpool Local Culture/ Education Partnership**
- **Board Member:**  
**Blackpool Opportunity Area Board**  
**Blackpool School Improvement Board**  
**NAHT National Executive**  
**National Primary Umbrella Group**



## Two students! HE or not to HE?



**Given many have had enough of education by 16, how do we change that and find ways that young people want to learn and stay on into further and higher ed?**

**Is our educational system predicated on a narrow gauge of results and tests/exams that don't recognise the totality of what it means to be educated?**

**Remembering facts is a low level thinking skill but its how our children are tested.**

**“The girl refused to step out onto the glassy lake...”  
Middle class bias in the education system.**

## **Our education system is shaped by independent agencies with no coherent overall strategy**

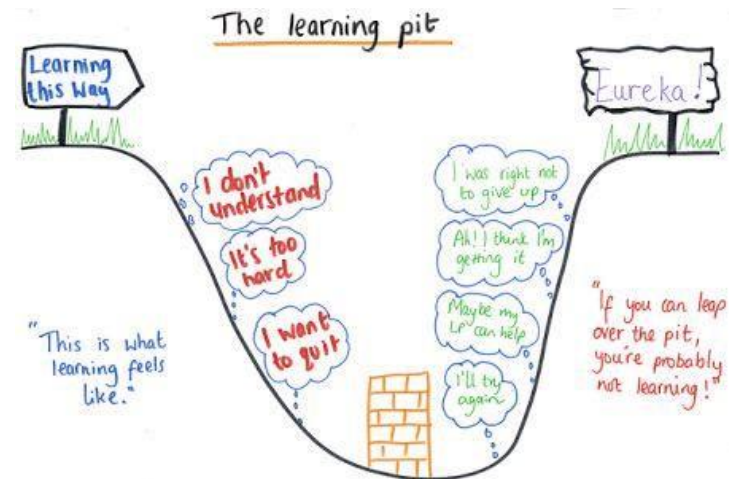
**“The independently constructed and well meaning agendas of Local Authorities, Ofsted, DfE, and wider governmental policy has conspired to create a perfect storm which has, over the last 12 years combined to narrow access and achievement for children and young people despite independently stated priorities proposing the opposite.”**

**Eg: Ofsted’s determination to improve attendance suggests fining parents to “use all tools available” which sees parents home educating. DfE suggest this route with LA’s to chase up EHE, but LA’s have no funds to do this.**

# Universal Access to Education – A 5 point vision

All learners irrespective of parental income:

- achieve their full potential.
- engaged in lifelong learning.
- develop a love of learning in itself.
- develop a resilience in learning.
- have their specific needs met.
- preparation for life beyond education.



# National Issues challenging our vision - Funding

According to the IFS's measure of school spending and 16- 18 funding:

- Total school spending per pupil has fallen by 8% in real terms between 2009–10 and 2017–18.
- Double whammy when cuts to LA and health services considered

When funding is short it's the most vulnerable who take the first hit.

- SEND funding
- PP funding has to cover more bases
- Fewer staff doing more with much less creates less time for our most vulnerable children and young people.

# National Issues challenging our vision - Inspection

- The fact that the new framework demands that children from disadvantaged communities make more progress than other children creates an incentive to work in less challenging areas.  
Working in a challenging community is “like playing Russian roulette with your career.” Stephen Tierney.
- This framework continues to unwittingly mitigate against schools serving the most challenging communities.
- Which is why we are suggesting a new role for Ofsted.

The Commission proposes a **new role for Ofsted**, focused on identifying failure and providing stronger diagnostic insight for schools that are struggling.



**Accountability + Lack of Funding = Workload**



# How do we get over the cost v income conundrum?

View across the country but especially in disadvantaged communities is that HE is expensive.

The alternative is to work and start earning.

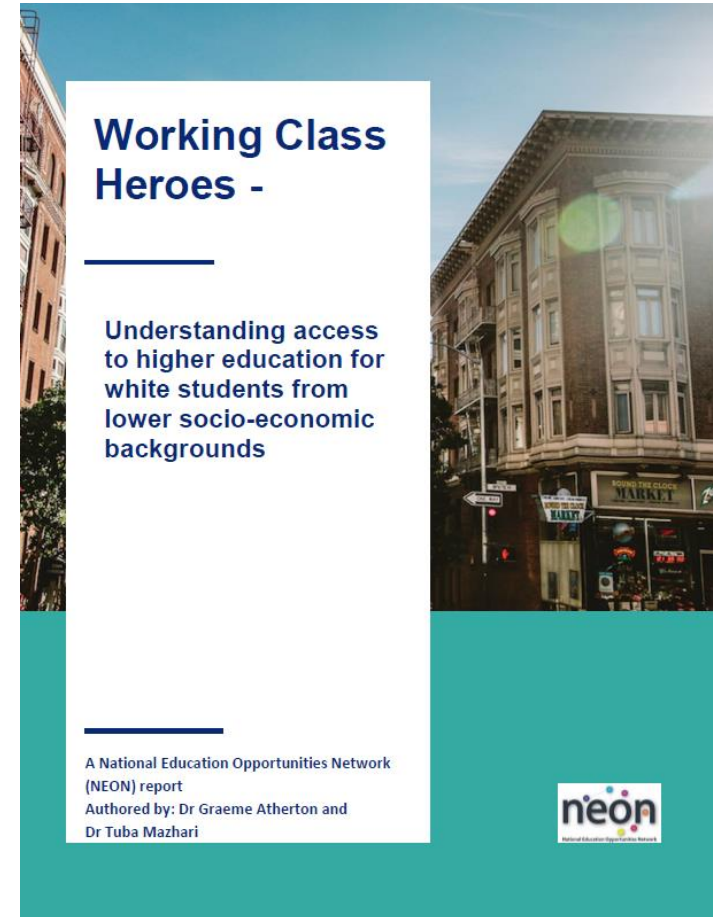
When money is tight the work option will almost always prevail.



# National Issues challenging our vision - Disadvantage

*“Over 50% of universities admit less than 5% of white students from the low participation neighbourhoods”*

*“If you’re from a disadvantaged area you’re 16X less likely to go on to HE.”*



# How do we break into the cycle to widen access?

**PEX affects disproportionately more pupils in disadvantaged areas**

- **Permanently excluded children - Statistically more likely to go to prison than university. PEX students want to know that someone cares.**

**How do we embrace these students?**

**How do we support vulnerable pupils through the system?**

- **Impact of children suffering with mental trauma means that they often don't "fit" with education and have had enough by age 16.**
- **Headstart /Merlin/ Blackpool Teaching School – Friend for School Y5 - 8 programme – potential to be more inclusive going forward? Need creative ideas.**
- **An obvious presence in every disadvantaged community. HE is part of my community and is for me.**

## How do we break into the cycle to widen access?

- How do we improve the educational experience – making learning enjoyable.
- The education system is littered with tests and exams. The results have become more important than the students.
- Accountability system switches off all but those who have a strong driver from home.
- “Failure” under the accountability system pushes disadvantaged students out of education.
- The approach of “filling” students with information for an exam makes pedagogical approaches and student engagement passive just when it needs to excite them.

Somehow we need to create a residential experience for those in KS3 and 4 to show that a Higher Education experience is more than just further learning.

# Solutions in the primary sector to develop engagement

## Primary Futures

### Addressing aspiration and gender stereotypes

Research shows that views about future careers are becoming formed at the age of 7

Secondary careers education is too late and different to Primary Futures

Builds aspiration in primary aged children

Challenges stereotypical views of jobs available to boys and girls

Lends relevance to the curriculum

We need to be building the further study /HE option into this model. How can further study enhance earning power?

Let's join the dots.

Redrawing the Balance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qv8VZVP5csA>



# Future developments

- **Potential to build in aspiration around HE from primary through secondary?**
- **Education Employers keen to work on this with an HE aspect as an option rather than straight to a career**
- **Lack of clarity in primary and secondary aged pupils about how the path in front of them might unfold – diagrammatic representation in every school? What might the future offer?**
- **Creating less specificity in options in study...**
  - **Never going to be a teacher**
  - **Combined studies**
  - **Opportunities for work placement**
  - **Try before you buy**

## Future developments - targeting disadvantaged areas

- Urgent need to build on the good pedagogical practice which sees learners owning their learning and having control over their learning. Empowerment v done to.
- Urgent need for great practice in those secondary and FE settings liaising with HE institutions to spread this practice across the system.
- Urgent need to build on effective practice in engaging primary aged children with activities at HE institutions. Needs to be an option. Lancaster offering termly tasters...
- Creation of central evaluated database where all HE institutions can go to see what is working nationwide. EEF database of effective practice.



## **In conclusion...**

- **We need a system wide response to the challenges to wider participation**
- **Joined up approach from all sectors all pulling in the same direction**
- **Experience of HE in engaging WWC boys is same issue for primary and secondary but potentially young people are switched off before KS5.**
- **OA work needs sharing. Blackpool and Hastings doing great stuff but in isolation.**
- **International learning? Who is having success with this agenda?**
- **Working with business to show benefit of lifelong learning.**
- **Database of what works in improving access and wider participation. EEF toolkit/ research.**
- **Change suffocating accountability structure that puts student well being behind institutional performance. Students feeling that education is self serving.**

# Important questions for government:

- achieve their full potential.

Does current educational pathway allow this? Early subject choice.

- engaged in lifelong learning.

Does the school system switch this off early in the rush for organisational grades?  
Especially disadvantaged students.

- develop a love of learning in itself.

Does the technical acquisition of knowledge to pass an exam undermine the joy of learning in itself?

- develop a resilience in learning.

Does the govt prioritise this alongside knowledge acquisition. As important for me.

- have their specific needs met.

Do the current funding arrangements for schools allow this so that all students can achieve?

- preparation for life beyond education.

Does the current obsession with grades allow for social/ community personal growth? HE really good at this.

- **Family barriers to widening access:**
  - poverty of ambition v need to work,
  - lack of knowledge of HE sector,
  - national funding arrangements,
  - suspicion of and lack of engagement with education sector from early years.
- **Urgent engagement with low take up communities:**
  - PEX/ White working class boys/ Travellers
  - Urgent need for multi agency research and remedial action to
    - support families and child development before compulsory
    - schooling.

## Us as educators?

- How attractive an offer is continued study given all the factors above, learners switched off.
- How do we seek to break into the more immediate hand to mouth approach of some disadvantaged communities and try to provide a longer term “deferred gratification” offer?
- Can we make further study more attractive financially?
- Can we get to learners and their families earlier than secondary as it’s clear attitudes are set well before secondary? Some great work going on with primary.
- How well does the programme of further study meet the needs of today’s learners and seem relevant to them?

**In a rapidly evolving world is it time to think again about what it means to be educated and how we embrace all learners and types of learning?**



## **Urgently need multi agency approach to:**

- **Drive a lifelong love of learning for itself. Disproportionate effect on disadvantaged communities. Permission from govt and impact of new EIF.**
- **Create clearer pathways for all students especially disadvantaged into HE.**
- **Make primary aged pupils far more aware of HE options as decisions being made about careers from the age of 6 and 7.**
- **Champion and set targets for disadvantaged communities and HE uptake.**
- **Challenge govt on closing down of curriculum into those areas that are tested and drilling for exams.**

**This is about social justice.**

Thank you for listening...

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