

NEON Awards 2024 Nominations

Category

NEON Widening Access Partnership Award

Names of institutions involved in the partnership

Birkbeck, University of London & The Mary Ward Centre

Brief Description

In January 2022 Birkbeck, University of London and The Mary Ward Centre partnered to support adult learners in Camden and Newham, who are currently out of formal education or training. Pathways combines life coaching and goal setting, designed to tackle attitudinal barriers and overcome practical challenges to adult learners living in poverty. The 4-hour workshop uses a holistic approach to give people the space to reflect on their life, their strengths and to dream big about their educational goals, leaving with a realistic 6-month action plan to kick start their journey to returning to education.

Why has this project been nominated

We have nominated this project to showcase the innovative approach and huge impact enabled by an embedded partnership. Put simply, a partnership is when separate organisations with shared values and vision, but different perspectives and expertise, work together to achieve shared objectives. Mary Ward and Birkbeck have a long-term strategic partnership and a commitment to shared mission and values. This was leveraged to effectively implement a specific delivery partnership for Pathways, showcasing how organisational commitment and intent can yield tangible results. The partnership has enabled outreach to a cohort of adults where workshops make a real difference, rather than those who would possibly have ended up applying to university regardless of the activity.

What is Pathways?

Pathways is a series of workshops that combine life coaching and goal setting, designed to tackle attitudinal barriers and overcome practical challenges to adult learners living in poverty. The 4-hour workshop uses a holistic approach to give people the space to reflect on their life, their strengths and to dream big about their educational goals, leaving with a realistic 6-month action plan to kick start their journey to returning to education. Activities were informed by a strengths-based approach to challenge deficit discourses associated with underrepresented learners.

Impact 2021/22 to Present:

20 workshops. 119 participants.

Percentage of participants committed:

14% free online learning; 32% return to education in 2 years; 27% return to education in next 6 months; 9% already applied to course.