

# **Breaking the GCSE Barrier – A HEFCE Funded Project**

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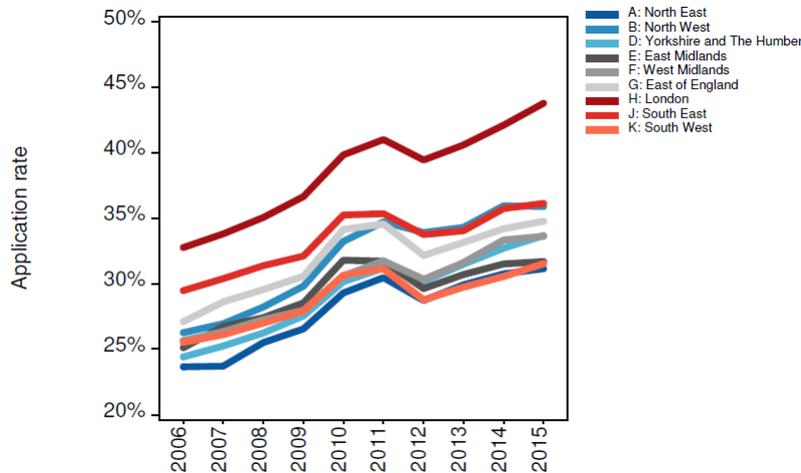
**In pairs please discuss:**

**‘Cultural activities’ (museums,  
theatre visits, university visits, etc.)  
you took part in as a young person**

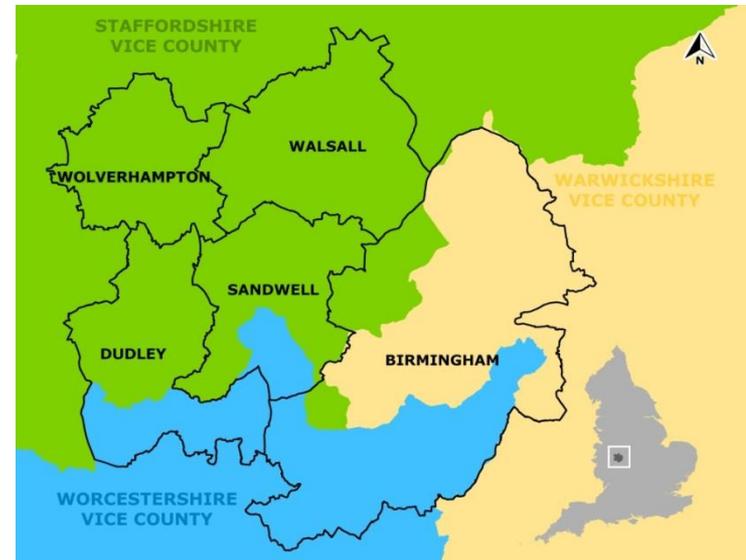


# The University of Wolverhampton

- Over 23,000 full time and part time students
- 70% of our students are from The West Midlands
- Wolverhampton is part of 'The Black Country' (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton)



January deadline application rates for English 18 year olds by region



# The Black Country

- A population of nearly 1.2 million
- Residents with 'no qualifications' - 16.7% in 2014 (significantly above the England average of 8.6%)
- 23% of the Black Country population have a degree, nationally this is 35.7%
- The Black Country is ethnically diverse with 76.7% White (compared to a national figure for England of 85.5%)
- The Black Country has 81 secondary schools and 308 primary schools and aims to increase the number of young people achieving GCSE 5 A\*-C grades (including maths and English) to 53.8% from its current position of 50.5%.

# Access and Outreach

- ‘University of Opportunity, Our vision, Your opportunity’
- Outreach programmes for students from primary to post-16 and mature learners as well as targeted programmes such as LAC mentoring
- Home of The Black Country Children’s University
- Work in partnership and collaboration with schools, colleges, councils and local businesses
- £250M investment in resources/facilities



# NNCO – Explore University

Part of  
**NNCO**  
National Networks  
for Collaborative  
Outreach



GCSE Project: Three schools from the Staffordshire area based on positive participation gaps

	Pupils from identified wards	Surveys and data collected from :
School 1	35%	Year 8 or 9 (Options year) Year 11 Year 12 Year 13
School 2	53%	
School 3	30%	

# **GCSE Research to Identify:**

- The factors that can have a positive impact on progression post-GCSE
- Home and school circumstances including:
  - strategies that schools use to engage pupils
  - support for pastoral, emotional and social needs
  - opportunities for parents to play an active role in their children's education
  - the provision of stimulation, positive feedback and creation of positive student learner identities

# Research Methodology

A range of data collected during the project from the following sources:

- Surveys of students and their teachers and parents/carers
- Demographic of cohort including home postcodes
- Student achievement, progression and destination data gained from national data sets
- Interviews and focus groups with current students and their teachers and parents/carers
- Interviews and surveys of students who have progressed through to HE and their parents/carers and former teachers

# Early Findings

## Parental Expectations

- Of the students surveyed, 33% had at least one parent that studied at UG or PG level
- 57% of students agreed that their parents wanted them to go to university
- Link to national research...**“it was often the case that those young people in our study who did go to university also had supportive family and peer networks where there was experience of participation in higher education.”**– BIS research paper 229, p. 67, November 2015.

## Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance

67% of students were either 'unsure' of whether they had received CEIAG or believed that they hadn't received any CEIAG, however 75% of students had an idea of what they would like to study.

“The young people we spoke to were often more likely to view information provided by their parents, wider family, siblings and peers or their own information searches more authoritatively than what might be considered more formal sources.” BIS research paper 229, p. 82, November 2015.

## Aspirations

66% of students knew where they would want to be in 10 years time **and** had some idea of the training and qualifications they would need – the majority planned on undertaking a degree qualification.

“**Institutional habitus** has the potential to influence who participates in higher education....(it explains) the way in which decision-making behaviour is affected by the perceptions, aspirations and opportunities of different groups of young people, within an institution’s sphere of influence.” BIS p. 76

A paediatrician	GCSEs, A-Levels and a University degree
Architect	K100 Degree in Architecture & a Masters Degree in Architecture and a part 3 RIBA exams
Construction Manager	280 UCAS points and a degree
Engineering	Masters in Engineering
General Practician	A degree in medicine
Mental Health (Psychiatric nurse)	A-Levels plus a degree in Psychology
Neuro-surgeon/Neuro-consultant	High GCSEs and A-Level results, and extra-curricular awards/experience
Psychological therapist	A degree in counselling psychology
Specialising in an area of medicine	GCSE's, A-Levels, University degree
Teacher (Primary or Special Needs)	University qualifications in primary education
Vet	High GCSEs, A-Levels and a degree

## School Environment

- These schools appear to offer good quality after school and leisure facilities which maintains student engagement.
- These facilities may help to counteract the following... “attitudes towards school appear to become less positive over time within both the advantaged and disadvantaged groups.” BIS research paper 229, p. 54, November 2015.
- A report released last week – Believing in Better, Sutton Trust, June 2016 – also emphasises: “Students who rated their secondary schools highly in terms of learning resources were almost six times more likely to believe it is very important to get a university degree” (p. 3) and “Students who felt it was very important to get a degree when they were in Year 9 were found to be twice as likely to go on to take three or more ‘A’ levels” (p.4)
- Only 10% of Year 9 students ruled out going to university and 55% were sure that they wanted to progress on to HE.

# Next Steps

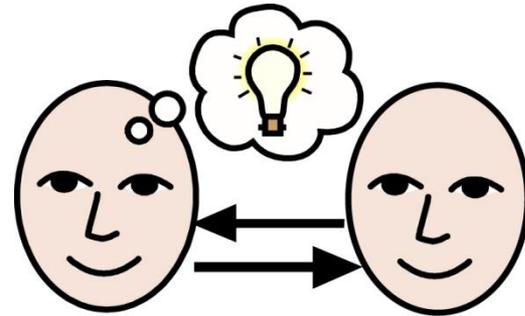
- Focus groups with parents and young people
- Development of resources, this will include:
  - A residential (project school students)
  - Input from UoW student ambassadors
  - Input from local businesses
- NNCO conference - dissemination
- Final report due December 2016

# Emerging Findings...

Any views?

Thoughts?

Ideas?



# Contact Details

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