



Higher
Horizons+



Part of the
National Collaborative
Outreach Programme



FROM AIMHIGHER TO NNCO TO NCOP: LESSONS LEARNT FROM COLLABORATIVE OUTREACH WORK

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Aims of the session

- To reflect on the national history of government-funded WP initiatives
- To examine local interpretation of these programmes
- What has been learnt? What comes next?
- How can we lobby for a sustainable future?

National History of Widening Participation

1997 Labour Government, WP a society problem – funded **Aimhigher**
£250 million over 12 years – centrally coordinated
Raise aspirations and attainment of any ‘WP learner’ via direct intervention

2012 – fees to £9k

Coalition Government, a university problem, not society

Introduced **Office for Fair Access (OFFA)**

A percentage of fees over £6000 must be spent on WP activity with no significant central funding

2014 – Election run in saw a £22 million two year scheme called **National Networks for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO)**

To address Universities who had stopped collaborating

38 Networks commissioned, to great success, and met aims of working with young people from “State-funded schools or academies to raise awareness of HE”

National Lessons Learnt: Aimhigher

Positives

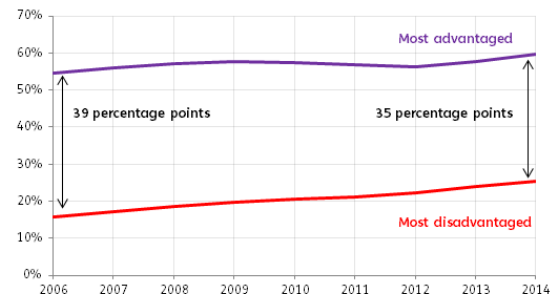
- Collaboration can work
- National Branding, with local hubs, works well
- LEA produced 'Aimhigher lists' of WP learners works
- Funding and high impact intervention, like summer schools will work
- Multiple 'touch points' are needed for greatest impact
- A Careers Advisory scheme as a bedfellow works (Connexions)

Negatives

- Lack of National evaluation will not please new governments
- Emphasised that WP schemes are married to Party politics
- Autonomy of spend in regional offices could be seen as inefficient

Record entry for disadvantaged teenagers

Proportion of young cohort accepted for entry to university full-time at age 18-19 by participation rate in local area (POLAR3) for England



Source: UCAS 2015 Application Cycle: End of Cycle Report

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National Lessons Learnt: OFFA

Positives

- HEIs begin to accept responsibility for the WP agenda, access schemes, and protected funding
- Senior managers forced to take WP seriously and strategically
- Made HEIs forge links with the local community – the rise of Community days and On Campus activity
- Brought retention to the front and centre of WP – larger Student Support Services
- *Fees may not be the barrier* – Scotland vs. England

Negatives

- HEIs became competitive with WP as an arm of recruitment activity
- HEIs slowed collaborative nature of WP work
- Became a 'box ticking' exercise
- Funds used for easy administration and not impact – “A grand off fees” schemes
- Autonomy that was granted HEIs saw the national consistency vary greatly

National Lessons Learnt: NNCO

Positives

- Government funding bolstered on going work
- Reintroduced collaboration between HEIs
- Free reign to use local knowledge, charities and Trusts with National practice sharing events
- National formative evaluation built in
- Created foundations for NCOP and the next steps

Negatives

- Timescales – 2 years, 18 months in practice – no time for real impact
- Spec too broad – no real WP targeting
- Funding sitting with HEIs, which were often in more than one NNCO was problematic for leads
- No real impact evaluation on a national level – EMWPREP, HEAT, attitudinal shifts etc.
- No real National brand – distrust from Schools

Local Response: Aimhigher to OFFA

Aimhigher (2000 – 2011)

- Team of 10 – £250,000 p.a budget
- Over 120,000 learner interventions
- Saw a rise in application from WP learners across the sector and at Keele
- Creation of a Collaborative Network, funded by Aimhigher that became **Higher Horizons**

OFFA only (2012 – 2014)

- Award winning projects...
- Keele agreed to match the Aimhigher budget
- 30,000 learner interactions
- Increased on-campus WP events
- **Continued to work collaboratively via Higher Horizons**
- Winner of Times Higher WP Initiative of the Year Award



Local Response: NNCO to NCOP

NNCO

- Cemented partnership which had existed since Aimhigher
- Around £500k funding over two years, split between partners with Keele as lead
- Two full time members of staff and part time administrator
- Just under 9000 learner interactions in 18 months
- Use of third parties to bolster projects – charities, social enterprises, educational trusts etc.
- Embedded evaluation – Level 1, 2, 3 and investment in tracking system

NCOP

- Leaning on lessons from previous projects – types of interaction, local knowledge, creating a known brand, creating 'NCOP lists' with LEAs
- Keele to lead a Hub and spoke model (like Aimhigher), robust evaluation strategy built in
- £11.8 million, with majority devolved to four funded hubs
- 5000 learner interactions since January



General Lessons

- WP is best in true collaboration – including a careers service bolt on
- Government funding is needed, but separated from Party Politics
- Local Autonomy with National Steer and Branding is needed
- A sustained view of 10 years or more with realistic targets is needed
- Tailored Programmes aimed at KS2 – KS5 work, creating...
- A ladder of engagement with at least 5 touch points to make an impact, with evaluation and tracking is the model to go for
- Impartiality creating platforms for decision making and barrier bashing are key
- We need passionate people, who speak *the language* who will **make stuff happen**

General Election: An Opportunity or a Curse?

TASK (15 MINS)

- In groups of 5, outline your ideal National WP Programme

Consider:

- Funding required
- How long will the programme run for
- Branding
- How would it look and feel
- Target what learners and what age groups – NCOP style? NNCO Style? Aimhigher Style?
- ***We may, tomorrow, have a way in via Gareth Snell MP, and we will use this session's feedback accordingly***

Feedback and Findings

2 minutes per group please

Next Steps

- Thank you for participating today
- We will take these findings to our local MPs and use them to inform the future of WP Initiatives (insert white middle aged, middle class males with blue and red ties graphic connoting lobbying government here)
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Any questions?

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