

Adult Learning Cafés

- A model of good practice

NEON Summer Symposium
Thursday 21st June

**Sheffield
Hallam
University**

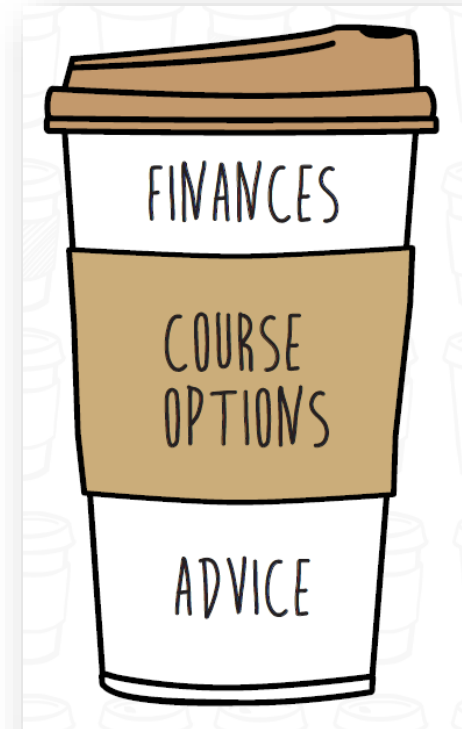
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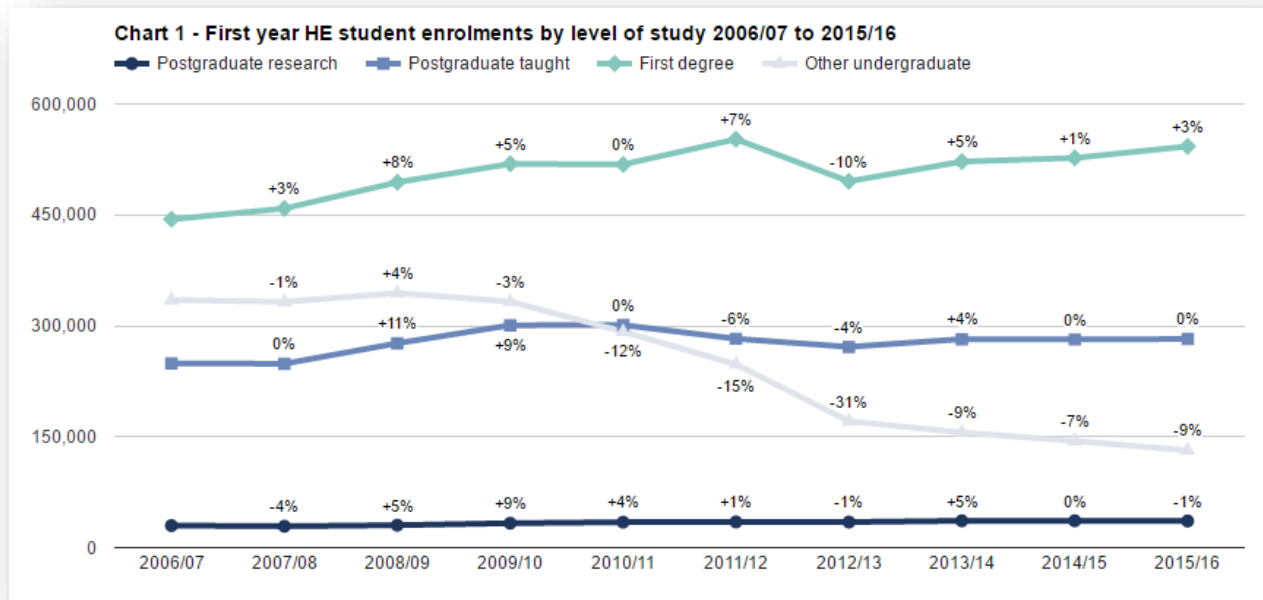
Coming up ...

- A bit of context
- Adult Learning Café delivery model
- Impact
- Some reflections: successes, challenges and learning



Mature Students in decline

The number of students progressing to University has almost doubled over the past 20 years, however during this time there has been a huge decline in the number of mature students – both part-time and full-time. Since 2010 these numbers have dropped by more than 60% (HESA)



A partnership approach: Adult Learning Cafés

Project Aims

- To engage with adults not currently in education and to reach out to them in a community setting
- To provide an informal and relaxed environment whereby attendees will feel comfortable approaching us to seek information and advice on Higher Education and the routes/options available to them
- To provide a range of different ways in which visitors can engage with the information on offer
- To run a series of sessions to allow follow up interactions with attendees
- That all of the above is planned and delivered collaboratively, with input from Sheffield Hallam University, The University of Sheffield, partner FECs and other stakeholders as appropriate



Learning Cafe model

Activity

2016/17

Sheffield pilot: 4 events over a four week period

2017/18

Sheffield V2.0: 8 events over a 9 month period

Barnsley roll out: 3 events over a three month period

Staffing

All events were collaboratively staffed with staff and current mature students from both Sheffield universities and local Further Education Colleges represented

This provided a breadth of knowledge from across the partnership (both FE and HE)

Promotion

Scattergun approach / no single route or communication channel

Co-hosted Facebook event page, Social media, Print media, Flyers

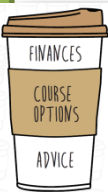
Existing contacts and networks (Sheffield Learning Champions, Barnsley Local Providers Network, NCT, Zest and Matrec)

Resources

University and college staff/students were our main resource

Institutional as well as generic/impartial literature

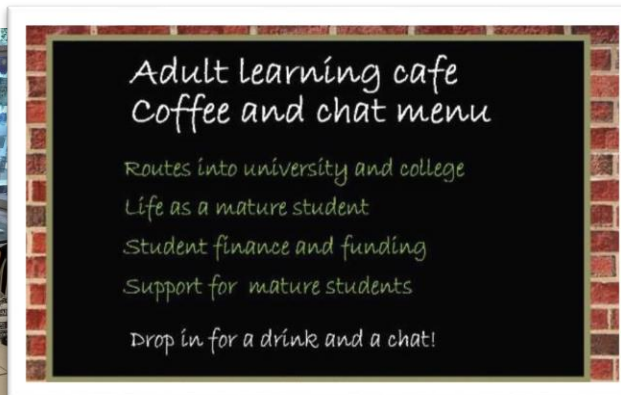
Links to HEPPs *"Yes It's For You"* mature student information



Sheffield Pilot

We piloted our first Learning Café at The Theatre Delicatessen in Sheffield on consecutive Friday's over a four week period in May/June 2017.

- Prominent city centre venue
- Friday mornings (10am to 1pm)
- 'Shop front' location
- Open plan
- Child friendly
- Staffed café to provide refreshments for attendees (and staff)



2017/18 developments

We are currently running V2.0 of our Sheffield Adult Learning Café at Union Street Cafe alongside rolling out the pilot into Barnsley

- New venues
- Varied days of the week, times of the day
- Piggy backing on existing events
- Staffed café
- Marketing plan and some budget



Impact

- Over 140 adults have visited our adult learning cafes
- Of evaluations received:
 - 100% said they found the event beneficial
 - 100% said they would recommend this event to others
 - 75% said they intended to apply for a course in the future, (23% said "maybe" and 2% said "no")

Since our June pilot:

- Attendees have applied for and enrolled on full time degree programmes at both The University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University
- Attendees have enrolled on The University of Sheffield's "*Discover*" programme for mature learners
- Attendees have enrolled on FE programmes at participating colleges as a potential pathway to HE

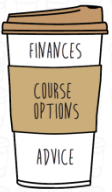


Impact

- "I learned of financial avenues and solutions I did not know I had before."
- "In depth information and great understanding staff."
- "Answered all my questions, made me feel incredibly welcome, and would definitely recommend to others."
- "After chatting to the staff I feel like I can see my options a little more and I'm looking forward to the follow up contact which will help me event more"

Sheffield Hallam University

"It's great to be able to reach prospective mature students which otherwise are not likely to come visit us for an open day or campus tour. Mature Student Ambassadors staffing the event have said that they would have loved this kind of opportunity before they applied to university as it improves the confidence and HE knowledge of adult learners"



Impact

The University of Sheffield

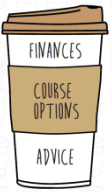
"The Learning Café project proved to be a positive and beneficial project for the University of Sheffield's Department for Lifelong Learning and an important part of our Outreach strategy in recent months."

Northern College

"To work in collaboration and have the financial and physical support has been great. I think any event is a success, whether we sign up five short courses (first café) or interact with many more people (last café) there will always be a return on investment for us at Northern College so long as the staffing is right. It was great to see many more people at the last café."

Sheffield College

"The event proved to be very useful. We have received applications for our access Health Science and for our humanities access course through the events. We also had a lot of interest regarding Maths and English GCSEs – I think it worked out very worthwhile."



Challenges & learning

- Maximising attendance - biggest challenge!
- Promotion of learning cafes
 - no one route / communication channel
 - scattergun approach required
 - promoting the event in advance to targeted groups is critical
 - Local partners have a key role in identifying groups/networks
- Scheduling/staffing of learning cafes
 - weekly vs monthly/six weekly
 - morning/afternoon/evening
 - weekday/weekend
- 'One off' interactions vs a series of progressive events - would a model of hosting the café on consecutive weeks facilitate repeat / follow up interactions with attendees?



Next steps

- 2018/19 plans under review: Funding partners need to make a decision re: continuation of the project in its current format.
- Attendance vs impact on those attendees
- Community based approach needs to be part of a wider strategy to engage with and support adult progression to HE.



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