Supporting disadvantaged white boys to progress to enter higher education

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About Brightside

- Background determines life choices and chances

- Young people need quality information and personalised advice

- Brightside was established in 2003

- Our online mentoring is designed to provide a practical and scalable tool to aid social mobility

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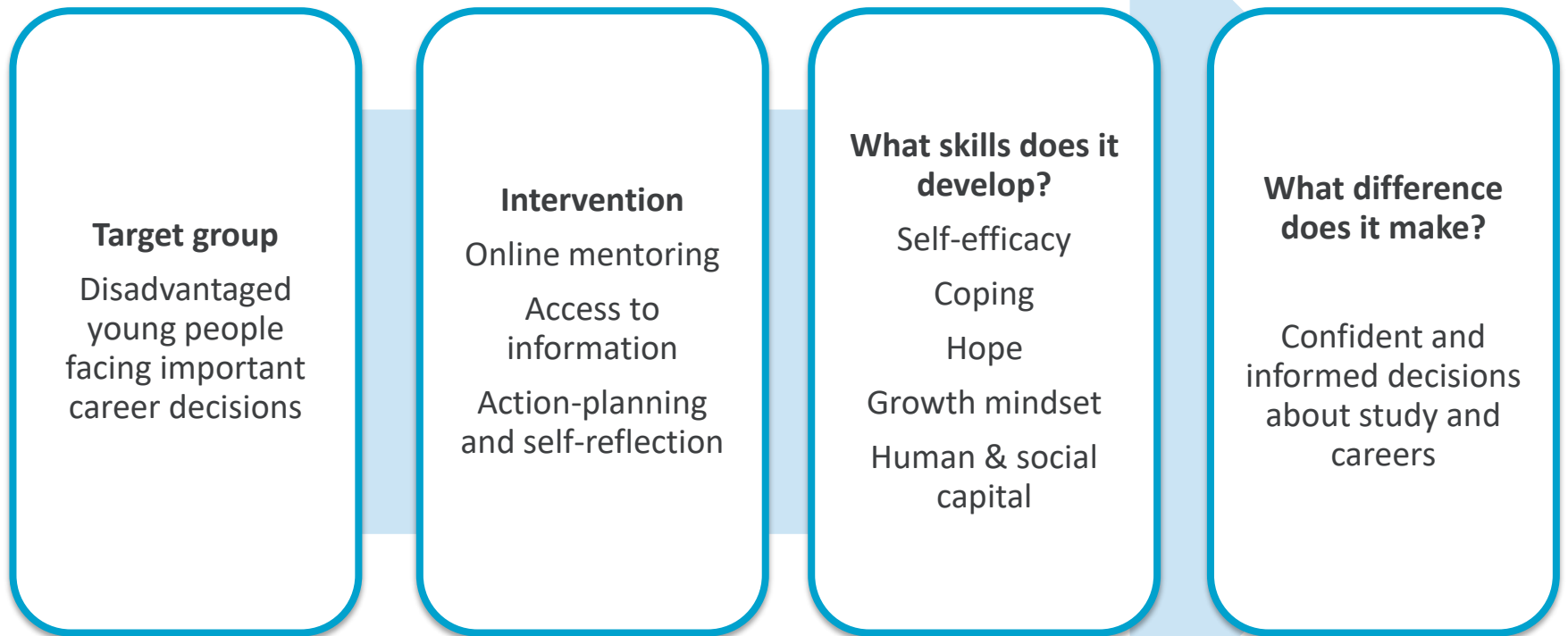
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About Greater Manchester Higher

- NNCO consisting of 5 HEIs and 12 FECs

- Core programme of collaborative activity supported by projects and targeted work

- Improve provision of and access to HE information, advice and guidance to target learners, to enable students to make informed choices

- Support and contribute to the growth agenda and development of higher level skills in the region

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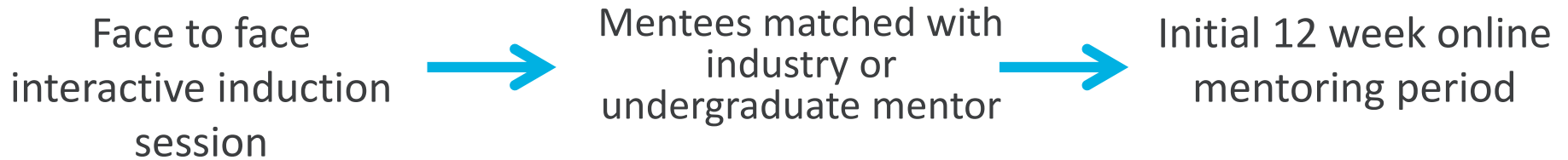online mentoring

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Rationale

- White working class boys have lowest progression and attainment

- Often have issues around aspiration

- Barriers linked to social and cultural class, and also the engrained culture of local area

- Group overlooked by other frequently used targeting methods e.g. Free School Meals data

Brightside's work

Target group

Disadvantaged young people facing important career decisions

Intervention

Online mentoring

Access to information

Action-planning and self-reflection

What skills does it develop?

Self-efficacy

Coping

Hope

Growth mindset

Human & social capital

What difference does it make?

Confident and informed decisions about study and careers

Mentoring model

Face to face interactive induction session → Mentees matched with industry or undergraduate mentor → Initial 12 week online mentoring period

- Mentees also participate in activity with extra responsibility in school
- Mentoring schedule distributed to mentors and mentees
- Communications plan followed to support relationships and maintain engagement
- Campus visit as an incentive at end of project

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Outcomes for learners

- Currently running a pilot, intended outcomes include:

  - ✓ Mentees feel more motivated to work hard at school
  - ✓ Mentees have a better understanding of future options & goals, and how to achieve these
  - ✓ Mentees have improved existing skills or developed new ones
  - ✓ Mentees feel that fewer barriers stand between them and their goals

- Second cohort to run from September

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Approaches to targeting

Practitioner knowledge
↓
Drew on experiences of WP practitioners in Greater Manchester

Local authorities
↓
Contacted 14 – 19 service teams in key areas re: which schools most appropriate

Learner targeting
↓
Some use to support with engagement with school, some work with pupils at risk of NEET etc.

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Consultation with schools

- Careful managing of messages & how this fits with school priorities

- Influence learner level targeting

- Consultation needed re: position of additional responsibility for mentees in school – very personalised to each school

- Input and commitment from schools is key to success

Initial findings

- 40 mentees matched to 15 mentors in pilot cohort

- Schools very keen to take part

- Group extremely mixed in terms of learners' attitudes towards both school and mentoring programme

- Engagement better where teacher allocates school time to project

- Structure and a clear goal are very important to learners

Challenges & lessons learnt

Mentor recruitment

Challenging as WP teams have limited contact with employers – look to outside agencies

High demand from schools

May need to be more selective with more robust targeting

Timing

Challenging time of year to run a project. Easter break had an effect on engagement.

Engaging the group

Could explore new ways to secure engagement e.g. opportunity to meet the mentor

Importance of buy in from school

Structured programme with in school time for the project is beneficial for engagement

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Benefits of partnership approach

- Neither organisation has worked with this cohort previously

- Brightside provides expertise in mentoring, project management, development and evaluation

- GMHNCO provides strong local knowledge and has existing relationships with schools & local authorities

- Working together provides additional links to businesses and universities for mentor recruitment

Future developments

- A higher number of schools taking part to form cohort two in September

- Any changes to the programme will be based on cohort one evaluation

- Number of NCOP wards have high populations that meet this demographic – thinking ahead to 2017 and beyond

- Follow up visit to University of Bolton for mentees

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Discussion points

Should universities review their offer in order to be inclusive for this group? E.g. culture, subjects

What are the other barriers to disadvantaged white boys progressing on to higher education? How can these be addressed & who by?

What approaches are you considering/delivering in your own institutions and organisations?

How do we define "disadvantage?"

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