

Aimhigher NCOP School and College Forum 7th March 2018

Format:

A 3.5 hour morning session covering progress to date, including:

- An overview of achievement and challenges to date
- Contributions from staff in two schools exploring different perspectives on the programme
- A presentation on work to consult students and “hear their voice”, including a contribution from students in years 9 and 10 at two schools
- A presentation on a new project to engage young people in community settings via detached youth work
- An opportunity to look at forthcoming activity
- Open discussions to explore the longer term future, possible funding scenarios and priorities

Outcomes / feedback

The event provided a good opportunity to thank school and college staff for their support and to share the latest information on progress, now the programme has matured and is in full delivery mode. The numbers of students engaged in the programme has grown dramatically since the last forum (December 2017) and the partnership was on course to meet ambitious targets for delivery

Presentations by Aimhigher progression Ambassadors and staff at Bartley Green School and Waseley School demonstrated how the programme had been embedded into schools, and illustrated the value of embedding Aimhigher funded staff in partner schools and colleges.

Work to involve and consult young people via the Student Voice project was generating valuable insights into their perceptions of education, progression and careers, and the barriers they face.

Colleagues were very interested in the Reach Out project and the potential for youth workers to engage young people outside the educational environment. There was a wide-ranging discussion of the complex issues encountered by young people and the impact these could have on their engagement in education and progression. Issues identified included perceptions of “gang culture” and masculinity, sex and relationships, mental health and domestic violence. School and college staff reported a lack of support services for young people facing complex / multiple barriers.

The following priorities, good practice and development ideas were identified

Queries / Challenges / Priorities	What Works and Development Ideas
Gaining the support of curriculum and senior leaders in some schools and colleges, especially for time off curriculum / external visits. Shortages of staff for cover etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less challenging where the programme is maturing and embedded. APAs and school / college coordinators becoming more “au fait” with procedures for booking trips / activities • More activities that do not require school / college staff supervision (e.g. Aimhigher staffed residentials and cultural capital visit days) • “Sometimes it’s easier to gain forgiveness than permission”!
Engaging students more effectively, especially in FE / 6 th Form College settings. Listening to “the student voice”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works best where APAs have high visibility, are perceived as full members of staff and have an identified “base” in the school / college • Use of “drop –in” surgery type support sessions • Focused support in line with wider cycles e.g. UCAS personal statement support, student finance support • Consider involvement in Student Voice programme. Contact Chloe Hale: c.hale@aston.ac.uk • Aimhigher to convene a meeting of FE College coordinators and FE-based APAs to review progress
How are APAs trained / supported as mentors? Does advice given cover non-traditional HE progression options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aimhigher has provided mentoring support for over 15 years. 5 day initial APA training includes 2 days devoted to mentoring skills, knowledge and aptitudes • Subsequent CPD has included sessions on engaging hard to reach students and effective facilitation • Aimhigher’s Learner Engagement Plan includes resources and materials on the full range of progression pathways

Queries / Challenges / Priorities	What Works and Development Ideas
Gaining consent to track students' destinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All partners to support current efforts to gain consent, and to promote prize draws etc • Aimhigher to monitor progress of GDPR legislation and review age of consent when UK law is clear
Engaging students with complex issues. Extending reach beyond the classroom. To what extent can Aimhigher help?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Reach Out Project will employ youth workers to engage students in community settings in South West Birmingham • Reach Out project will include liaison with school and college staff more widely. This will inform developments and may lead to project work, CPD for staff and sign-posting / referral to specialist sources of support
Planning for an uncertain future. Funding to December 2018 or beyond?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority view that fundamental model of embedded APAs and wrap around programme of university outreach and commissioned projects was valuable and should be continued • There would be demand for more APAs, and for more days per week for APAs in their hosts schools / colleges • If only funded to December 2018 schools and colleges would like to prioritize support for year 11 and year 13 students

A.O.B

Next Forum

4th of July 2018

University College Birmingham

An afternoon session as part of the day-long Aimhigher Annual Conference.

Please encourage a member of SLT and your Aimhigher coordinator to attend.