Widening Participation: What is it all about?

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Overview

- What is Widening Participation?
- National Trends in Participation
- Where is Leicester?
- AimHigher and beyond
- The local context
- How we work to support WP
• Widening access and improving participation in higher education are a crucial part of our mission. Our aim is to promote and provide the opportunity of successful participation in higher education to everyone who can benefit from it. This is vital for social justice and economic competitiveness.

• Widening participation addresses the large discrepancies in the take-up of higher education opportunities between different social groups.
WP targets – under-represented in HE

- NS-SEC 4-7 (National Statistics – Socio-Economic Classification)
- Ethnic groups
- Gender groups
- Disabled
- Looked after
- Mature
The education gap

- In Independent and the highest achieving state schools, 85%+ of pupils attain 5 A*-C at GCSE
- In the least successful state schools, less than 20% of pupils attain at this level
- In Leicester, virtually all of the NEET population can be traced back to one of six Primary schools in the most deprived parts of the city
- 70% of white working class boys in this city are under-achieving
How do we target our work?

- HEFCE data – Polar2 (Participation of Local Areas)
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)
- Fischer Family Trust data
- Mechanisms for ensuring that direct work with schools and colleges prioritises young people within target groups
National trends in participation

Since mid-1990s:

- Young participation in higher education has increased by over 20% (from 30% to 36%).
- The proportion from the most advantaged areas who enter higher education has increased by 15%.
- The proportion from the most disadvantaged areas who enter higher education has increased by 50%.

‘Trends in young participation in higher education: core results for England’ (HEFCE 2010/03)
National trends in participation

Figure 2  Trends in young participation for areas classified by HE participation rates (POLAR2 classification, adjusted4)
National trends in participation

Figure 21 Trends in young participation for areas grouped by the proportion of children in NS-SEC 1-3 households
National trends in participation

Figure 23: Trends in young participation for areas grouped by the proportion of children in lower-income households.
Selective universities?

‘What more can be done to widen access to highly selective universities?’ Harris 2010
Where is Leicester?

- 2009 Performance Indicators:
  - State School intake = 88.8%
  - NS-SEC 4-7 = 25.4%
  - Low Participation Neighbourhoods = 7.5%
- Figures very consistent over time
- Despite increasing entry requirements
Britain’s Top 20 Universities (Times 2012)

- Bath
- Bristol
- Cambridge
- Durham
- Edinburgh
- Exeter
- Imperial College
- King's College London
- Leicester
- LSE
- Loughborough
- Nottingham
- Oxford
- Sheffield
- Southampton
- St Andrews
- Sussex
- UCL
- Warwick
- York
Those that meet State School benchmark

Sheffield
Southampton
Sussex
Leicester
York
And their benchmark for Lower Socio-Economic Groups
Why are we interested in Widening Participation?

• Part of our strategic vision: “We believe that the best universities are not just the privilege of elites”
• Part of our agreement with OFFA to charge fees
• Good for admissions – we want to attract the best students
• Part of our obligation to our community
• Because it is right
Fees, OFFA and Access Agreements

• To charge fees, need Access Agreement with OFFA
• Must set targets for improving participation rates
• Ours targets are for:
  – small increase in above figures
  – small improvements in retention (note mature student retention is an issue)
  – partnership work to support progression in local area
• Very challenging against backdrop of fees and rising entry standards
How do we do this?

- Initiatives to expand the pool of students in the market:
  - Raising aspirations amongst learners
  - Raising attainment amongst learners

- Initiatives to recruit students from this pool

- Ensuring fair admissions, removing inherent bias from our admissions processes

- Providing support for less well off through scholarships and increased hardship fund
AimHigher and beyond

- National programme
- Locally co-ordinated a range of outreach activities that we were part of and delivered
- Wound up summer 2011
- New partnership for Leicester/shire with HEIs, Schools, FE and other stakeholders
- Continuing current activities
- New staff appointed to replace AimHigher funded staff
- Further expansion planned for 2011/12
Targeting students

• Use proxies:
  – IMD (Indices of multiple deprivation) – need to be in 40% most deprived
  – Likelihood of attaining 5+ A*-C

• Also:
  – Students with disability
  – Students in care
Local AimHigher work: Impact on attainment

The gap in achievement between AH and non AH is being reduced.
Local AimHigher work: Impact on attainment

The core Aimhigher Group continues to outperform at L2 and L3 all other groups of learners including non core AH and non AH students.
Growth in HE Entry from Low Participation Areas (City)
Growth in HE Entry from Low Participation Areas (County)

- **High HE participation areas** (POLAR2 quintiles 3-5)
- **Low HE participation areas** (POLAR2 quintiles 1-2)
Summary so far...

- WP important nationally
- Some progress being made nationally
- Leicester currently strong and successful, but challenges ahead
- Some evidence of impact of local partnerships and activities
- Still significant gap in participation in HE at all levels (nationally, locally and here at Leicester)
The shape of education in Leicestershire

- Different models of education within the city and between the city and county

- City demographics – east/west divide

- ‘Best’ city schools achieve above national average 55% A*-C GCSE (Rushey Mead, Soar Valley, Judgemoadow)

- Most challenging city schools are below coalition ‘floor’ target’ of 35% (New, Hamilton) but attainment is significantly improved
The work of the Student Recruitment team

• Organisation of Open and UCAS visit days in collaboration with departments
• IAG for year 12+ in schools
• Data, including demographic data on intake
• Annual Teacher and Adviser Conference
The work of the WP Team

- IAG for pre 16 pupils, parents, carers
- Realising Opportunities – national compact scheme
- Students in Classrooms
- Looked After Children
- Projects – MedReach, Routes into Languages, STEM
- Residential programmes
- Safeguarding
- Collaborative working within the College structure
Working together

• Strong synergies between SR and SCS teams
• Working to strengthen collaborations with Departments and Colleges to support recruitment and WP
• Gathering intelligence about ‘outreach’ for HEIF and PE reporting
• Last year about 16,000 young people accessed this
Embedding

- Widening participation and diversity is important to the university in meeting strategic goals for inclusion and public engagement.

- Embedding is a way of ensuring that WP and other goals are met more easily and within resource.

- Examples – Marketing, UAS, Ambassadors, Staff Development, HR, Equal Opportunities, AccessAbility.

- Employability.
THE Awards Winner